

USUAL GIRLS



ROUNDABOUT
UNDERGROUND



ROUNDABOUT
THEATRE
COMPANY

UPSTAGE **GUIDE**

A publication of

EDUCATION AT
ROUNDABOUT

UPSTAGE SPOTLIGHT



USUAL GIRLS

By Ming Peiffer

Directed by Tyne Rafaeli

How do girls grow up? Quickly, painfully, wondrously. On an elementary school playground, a boy threatens to tell on the girls for swearing—unless one of them kisses him. But just before lips can touch, Kyeong tackles the boy to the ground. The victory is short-lived. Over the coming years, Kyeong's stories get stranger, funnier, more harrowing—and more familiar. This hilarious, explicit gut-punch of a play bursts with playwright Ming Peiffer's bold, explosive voice.

A NOTE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TODD HAIMES

In a world that all too often attempts to muffle the many and varied voices of its women and people of color, *Usual Girls* is a loud, defiant shout. Kyeong, the heroine of Ming's magnificent play, faces a transition from adolescence into adulthood that proves to be an endless battle—a battle against bigotry, against harassment, against peers who feel entitled to breach her coming-of-age journey for their own ego or their own pleasure. From the schoolyard to the college party, Kyeong confronts those who would belittle her for her gender, her race, or both. Why must she, on her own, be forced time and time again to convince others of her basic humanity? In tackling this question, *Usual Girls* pulls no punches, dramatizing girlhood in all its dangers, injustices, and triumphs. It is this brave and unrelenting honesty that captivates me most about Ming's writing. Her fearless style makes for mesmerizing storytelling but caters to no expectations of form, message, or content. With Ming's fiery humor and sharp theatricality, *Usual Girls* captures misogyny and racism at their ugliest to expose what keeps them alive, and what might silence them for good.

WHEN Late 1980s—2018

WHERE Playgrounds, Bathrooms,
and Basements

WHO

Kyeong: Curious about her place in the world. Navigating and exploring sexuality, seen through adolescence and beyond

Anna: Book smart but ignorant when it comes to the birds and bees

Lindsay: The alpha in her clique

Marina: Another friend, a bit of an oddball

Sasha: The first to reach puberty of her group

Rory: A boy who grows up with Kyeong

Father: Divorced and an alcoholic

Woman: An onlooker throughout Kyeong's journey

Older Girl/KKG Sister: Young women Kyeong meets in Ohio and New York City

WARNING: This UPSTAGE Guide contains mature content, strong language, and sensitive information about sexual assault and/or violence that may be triggering to survivors.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Interview with Playwright Ming Peiffer Page 4-5

What is *Usual* for a Girl Growing Up in America? Page 6-7

Interview with Director Tyne Rafaeli Page 8-9

Puritans to Pussy Hats: Changing Sexual Norms in American Popular Culture..... Page 10-11

Interview with Actor Midori Francis Page 12-13

Friends, Foes, and Fitting in: Adolescent Social Psychology Page 14-15

Discrimination, Trauma, and the Brain Page 16

Coming of Age on Stage Page 17

Interview with Set Designer Arnulfo Maldonado..... Page 18-19

Usual Girls Introduction to Ohio Page 19

Pre- and Post-Show Activities..... Page 20-21

Resources..... Page 22

Roundabout Archives and Staff Interview Page 23

UPSTAGE CONTRIBUTORS

MANAGING EDITORS:

Jill Rafson, Director of New Play Development
 Jason Jacobs, Teaching Artist
 Leah Reddy, Teaching Artist

WRITERS:

Elizabeth Dunn-Ruiz, Teaching Artist
 Nick Mecikalski, Artistic Associate
 Clare McCormick, Artistic Apprentice

INTERVIEWS:

Ted Sod, Education Dramaturg

GRAPHIC DESIGN:

Darren Melchiorre, Associate Director, Art and Design

EDUCATION STAFF:

Jennifer DiBella, Director of Education
 Mitch Mattson, Director of Career Training
 Katie Christie, Director of Teaching and Learning
 Karen Loftus, Lisa & Gregg Rechler Education Program Manager
 Victoria Barclay, Education Program Manager
 Jackie Maris, Education Coordinator
 Sean Tecson, Education Coordinator
 Olivia Atlas, Education Coordinator
 Olivia Jones, Temporary Community Partnerships Coordinator
 Kimberly Aragon, Education Intern
 Lindsay McAuliffe, Education Intern

Copyright © 2018 Roundabout Theatre Company, Inc.
 All rights reserved.

INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT MING PEIFFER

Playwright Ming Peiffer was born in Manhattan but grew up mostly in Columbus, Ohio. She attended Colgate University and Graduate School at Columbia University. Peiffer spoke with Education Dramaturg Ted Sod about her work on *Usual Girls*.

Ted Sod: What inspired you to write *Usual Girls*? What do you feel the play is about? Does the play have personal resonance for you and, if so, how?

Ming Peiffer: The genesis of this play was unlike any of the others that I've written. Originally, it was a play about Dov Charney, the disgraced former CEO of American Apparel, because I knew I wanted to write about the female experience, about misogyny, and the systems in place in our culture that contribute to the denigration of women in society. But as I was writing the first couple of scenes, I began realizing that by elevating a Dov Charney-like character to be the main character of the play, I was centering my story on a known abuser and misogynist, and while I wasn't portraying him in a positive light, I suddenly realized with a vehement force that by choosing to write about him I was putting him, yet again, in a position of power as the (anti-)hero of the story and propagating the nefariousness of the male gaze.

Once I realized what I had done by centering this story around this abusive man, I started to seriously investigate why my initial impulse was to center the story around him when I knew I wanted to write about the female experience. What programming had I been subjected to while growing up to assume that the interesting story here was the one that revolved around the man? I was disturbed by my impulse to give this person I despised the power over my own story. And thus began a long period of reflection about how we are programmed as women to view gender, power structures, sex and how early perceived gender and gender stereotypes start to condition how we behave in the world. I then went to an extremely personal place and asked myself what experiences as a woman, and as a woman of color, shaped my life and ultimately who I became in adulthood.

After scrapping almost all of the original play (except for scenes where there is direct commentary from a female voice about themes in the play), I ended up with an extremely personal play about my own experience growing up as a woman of color in middle America. The play is very specific to my own reality, but I think due to its specificity, it resonates on a universal level. At its core, the play is a bildungsroman with an emphasis on sexual politics and the very binary gendered experience that many of us grow up with, and suffer from, no matter how we identify.

TS: Will you give us a sense of the kind of research you had to do in order to write this play and how you went about doing it?

MP: The play is culled directly from my own life experiences. So, no research in terms of looking to outside sources. Instead, the process was a lot of excruciating self-examination and excavation of dark emotional places that I tried to forget about in my struggle for survival growing up in a predominantly white, predominantly Christian, predominantly Republican town in Ohio. However, it was also about finding the lightness and joy in growing up female despite oppressive conditions.



Ming Peiffer

TS: Will you talk about the development process for this play? Will you continue to rewrite throughout the upcoming RTC rehearsal and preview process? If so, what type of events usually motivate your revisions during rehearsals or previews?

MP: Roundabout has been an indelible factor in the development of this play. The play had its first professional reading as part of the Roundabout Underground Reading Series back in the winter of 2017, and since then we've been given two workshops to further develop the play. During those workshops, we've lost entire characters, scenes, and what has emerged is a much more streamlined play that truly underlines how one's childhood and adolescence affects who you become as an adult.

So much has happened in the world since I first finished a draft of this play back in spring of 2016 while in Columbia University's MFA Program. With the #MeToo movement sparking so many national and international conversations about women's role in society, and the marginalization and violence often inherent to growing up female, it is imperative that I make sure this play stays abreast of the morphing conversation surrounding sexual politics and womanhood. My job is to make sure that my play continues to further the conversation instead of reiterating what we know to be true.

TS: Your play deals with how young women go through specific rites of passage from grade school through post-college and how painful some of these milestones can be. Why were you interested in writing about these subjects?

MP: I chose to write about these subjects because in my adulthood I realized that I knew more about male anatomy, milestones, and experiences than I did about my own experience that I lived through. And finally, I was able to identify how much of a problem that is in our society and how it contributes to the dehumanization of women. For example, I knew what a wet dream was before I knew what discharge was. I had seen locker room scenes where boys hilariously talk about boners, but I was ashamed and frightened by my own menstruation. I was aware of the idea of “balls dropping” but had no idea what was happening when suddenly my own breasts began to develop. My relationship to my own body was that of a stranger. Partially because sexual education where I grew up was poor, but perhaps more problematic was that I never saw those things represented in media or celebrated in life. There continues to be a pervasive stigma attached to the realities of the female body. Why is there an embarrassment there? Why is male sexuality (albeit a very specific, heteronormative sexuality) celebrated and normalized whereas female sexuality continues to make people deeply uncomfortable? I really wanted to write something that showed the complexity of growing up female-bodied and female-identifying that showed the darker sides, but also the beauty, fun, and wonder of growing up female. And more importantly, the normalcy of these things.

As far as depicting the darker sides of female friendships, there is the pervasive “mean girl” motif that paints these girls as vapid, stupid, inherently mean, and inherently materialistic and only interested in beauty and popularity. I wanted to show that much of this behavior is learned behavior that comes from our toxically masculine society. So much of women turning on each other, or not supporting each other, or friendships disintegrating, stems from the fact that we women are all trying to survive in a world that calls for our destruction. For example, a prime relationship in the play breaks up because these girls are so afraid of being ostracized as a “slut” that they’d rather point their

fingers to another girl than allow the finger be pointed at themselves—when instead we should be examining the culture that tells us that women who are sexually open are sluts whereas men who act in such a way are just men.

Moreover, I think Kyeoung’s race factors into how she is eventually shunned from her friend group for being other. The other girls acted out sexually as well, but for some reason (I would venture to say it is her racial otherness) Kyeoung is the one who suffers the most from being a sexual being (though I think they all suffer greatly in different ways due to being sexual females). Our society encourages women to turn on each other because of a deep fear of what would happen if we banded together. I think much of the recent legislation that polices female bodies is coming in direct response to that very fear.

TS: Another idea in the play is the tenuous relationship between children and their parents. How some parents act like children and force children to act like parents. How did you find that dynamic in the play, and why was it important to you?

MP: My father was an abusive alcoholic and drug addict, and I was put in a parental role at a very young age. Having to explain away my father’s drunkenness in public arenas, or helping him feed himself because he was too smashed to hold a spoonful of Cheerios, put me in a caretaker’s position while I was still a child. This was important to me because it was true to my experience but also because the entire play revolves around this question about how your formative years play out into who you become. And obviously, parental influence is an enormous factor in that. Similarly, I wanted to examine how our ingrained societal constructs affect who we become, and parents are a huge representative of that. For example, Rory’s character says some incredibly racist things to Kyeoung, but we learn that he parrots those ideas from his father who harbors those sentiments. I also believe children are extremely smart (and eventually will become the adults who rule our world), so showing the ways in which parents are sometimes children again, and how children start modelling themselves to be parents, became extremely important in illuminating how everything we say and do influences the children around us—particularly the ones who look up to us—and hopefully forces us to ask ourselves what we want to do differently for this next generation.

TS: What other projects are you working on? What are you most excited about writing next?

MP: In theatre, I am currently working on a new play that deals with illegal organ trafficking, the sex trade, and toxic masculinity. I don’t want to say too much more because I don’t want to give it away! In television and film, I’m adapting the gorgeous novel *Chemistry* by Weike Wang into a film for Amazon, developing an original comedy pilot centered around a bi-racial Asian American woman trying to escape her dysfunctional family and hometown for FX, adapting the comic book *The Divine* by Tomer and Asaf Hanuka into a pilot/series for AMC, and working on a new Netflix show that I hope will get picked up soon!

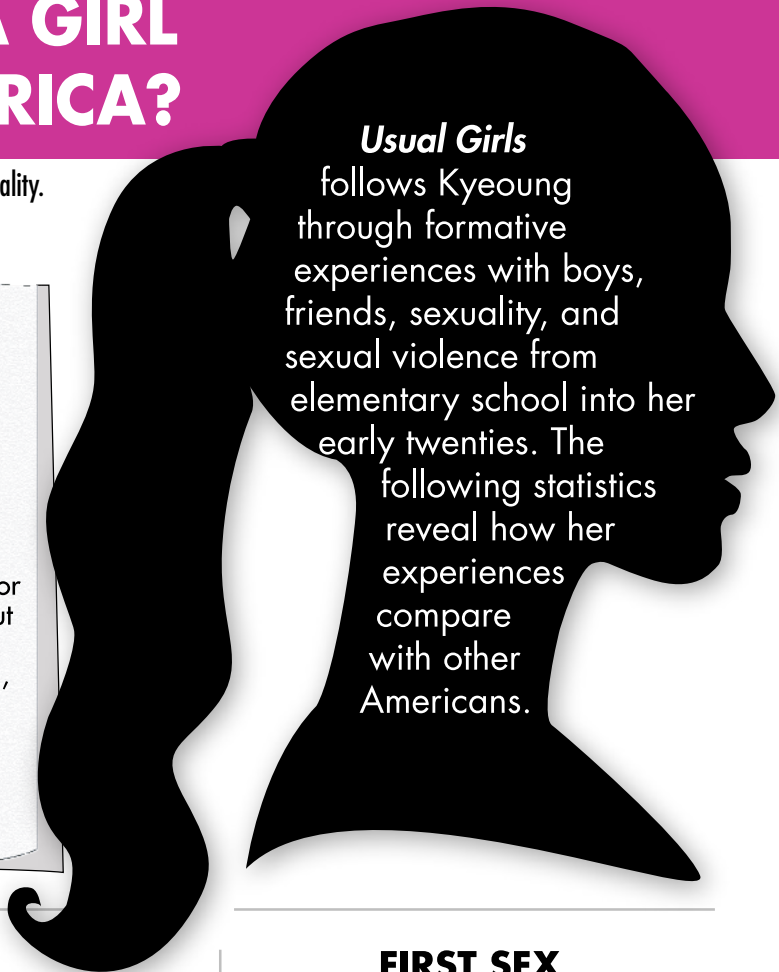
I’m excited about all of these projects because they all feature diverse leads dealing with a multitude of conflicts that explore larger themes of the human experience and not just in terms of their racial identities, but all the factors that make up a beautiful, complex human. •



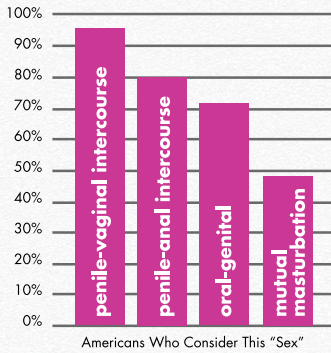
Ming Peiffer in rehearsal for *Usual Girls*
Photo: Jenny Anderson

WHAT IS USUAL FOR A GIRL GROWING UP IN AMERICA?

Warning: This infographic contains mature content and language describing sexuality. It is intended for audiences ages 16 and older.



WHAT IS SEX? AMERICAN ADULTS AND TEENS DO NOT AGREE



Source: Kinsey Institute

DEFINITIONS TO KNOW

CONSENT

agreement to participate in sexual activity

SEXUAL ASSAULT

any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient; includes touching, attempted rape, forcing someone to engage in sex acts, sex trafficking, child pornography, and incest.

U.S. Justice Department

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AND SEX

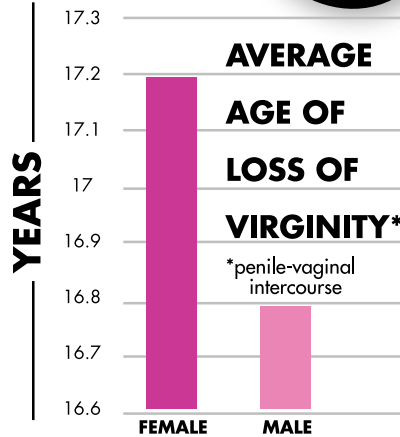
40% have had sex

7%

of them "physically forced to have sexual intercourse when they didn't want to"

60% have not had sex

Centers for Disease Control



"American Virgin: First-Time Sex Trends of U.S. Males and Females," Superdrug Online Doctor

FIRST SEX

WITH STEADY PARTNER

WITH FRIEND OR SOMEONE THEY JUST MET



Center for Disease Control and Prevention



24 states and the District of Columbia mandate sex education



22 states require that sex education include information on making healthy decisions around sexuality

Guttmacher Institute



Warning: This infographic contains mature content and language describing sexuality. *It is intended for audiences ages 16 and older.*

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS AGES 12-18 WHO REPORTED BEING BULLIED

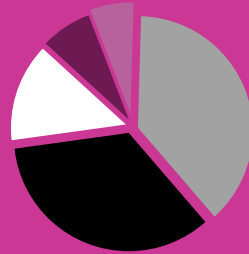
22.8%
of females

18.8%
of males

National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016

HOW WERE GIRLS BULLIED IN 2015?

U.S. Dept of Education,
National Center for Educational Statistics



- Subject of rumors: 15.5%
- Called names, insulted: 13.9%
- Excluded from activities: 5.5%
- Threatened with harm: 2.9%
- Forced to do things against their will: 2.3%

AS MANY AS
40%

of children who are sexually abused are abused by older or more powerful children

Darkness to Light,
David Finkelhor & Anne Shattuck, Broman-Fulks, et al.

SAME-SEX EXPERIENCE BY WOMEN AGES 15-44

17%

have had intimate same-sex relationships at some point

6%

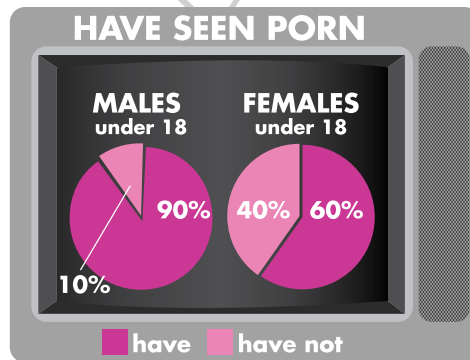
consider themselves bisexual

2%

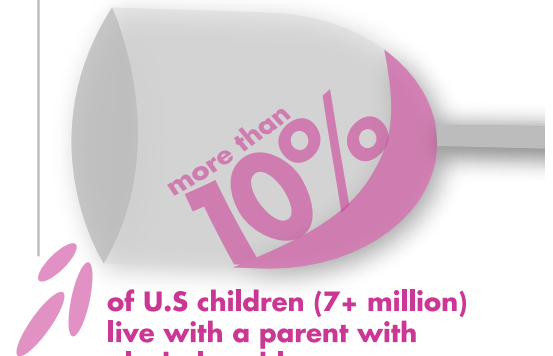
consider themselves gay

Centers for Disease Control

HAVE SEEN PORN



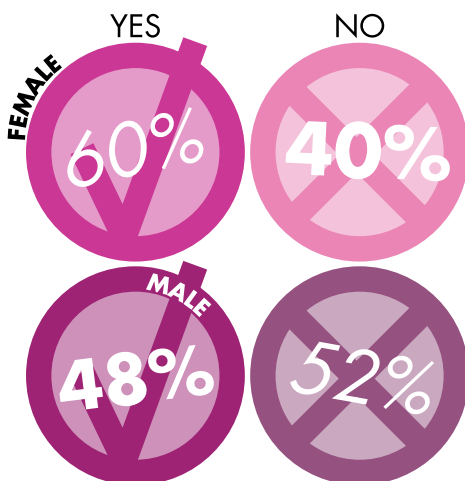
fightthenewdrug.org



of U.S. children (7+ million) live with a parent with alcohol problems

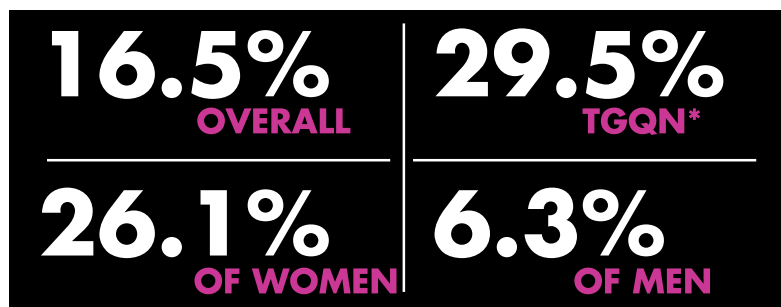
National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)

ARE UNWANTED PROVOCATIVE REMARKS A FORM OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE OR ASSAULT?



National Sexual Violence Resource Center

PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGE SENIORS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT AS A RESULT OF PHYSICAL FORCE OR INCAPACITATION**



*transgender, genderqueer, nonconforming, questioning, or not listed

**Incapacitation through alcohol or drug use

AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR TYNE RAFAELI

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod sat down with director Tyne Rafaeli to talk about her work on *Usual Girls*.

Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated? When and why did you decide you wanted to become a theatre director? Did you have any teachers who had a profound impact on you?

Tyne Rafaeli: I was born in London to American parents. My parents worked in the film industry, and they worked for American networks their entire careers. I'm deeply connected to London as a city but don't have any real familial connection to the UK. I was a very serious child gymnast from the age of 6 to the age of 14, but I got injured. When sport left my life, theatre entered. Physical and visual artists like Pina Bausch, Simon McBurney, Peter Brook, and Ariane Mnouchkine were my early introduction to what theatre could be. I was lucky enough to be accepted into the Guildhall School of Music and Drama as an actor, and that was a very rigorous classical education from the Greeks to Chekhov to Shakespeare. It was at Guildhall that I met Patsy Rodenburg, who is one of the foremost Shakespeare teachers. She took me under her wing; she was the first person to identify that I had a director's instinct. I worked with her for many years after graduating Guildhall, and worked as an actor on stage and film, but gradually my directing work phased out the acting work. I was offered a generous scholarship to Columbia, and I went to grad school there for directing. Anne Bogart runs that program, and she is an extraordinary educator. Anne opened my eyes to the craft of directing. And it was really at Columbia that my early experimental influences, my classical education, and my desire to do work on a bigger scale all came together. It was at Columbia that I met Bartlett Sher. I met him through Anne, and Bart brought me on board as his assistant for *Golden Boy* on Broadway, which was my real first step into the professional American theatre. Bart Sher has had a profound influence on me and has been the most transformational teacher of my artistic life. I think we did about six or seven shows together. We share a value system. We share a frame of reference. We share a sense of humor!

TS: Why did you choose to direct *Usual Girls*? What do you think the play is about, and how is the play relevant to you?

TR: Ming Peiffer, the playwright, and I were put together by people that I greatly trust, and the first time I read the play it shook me at my core. It is a celebration of the wonders and mystery of growing up as a woman in the world. It also shines a microscopic light on how we treat young women. And it has a very particular perspective of an Asian-American woman growing up, especially in relationship to her body and sexual identity. I use the word "celebration" specifically, because Ming has a wicked sense of humor and a strikingly honest voice. This play could not come at a more perfect time. It doesn't come down on any side. It's not political with a capital P. It's human and, as I say, it shines light on things that I have never experienced in the theatre: how our bodies work, how silenced we are about our bodies, how as young women we discover things without any real guidance. Within the community of young girls, you are discovering things that there are no roadmaps for: what is this stuff that's coming out of my body? What are these things that are growing on my body? What are these impulses I have? What are these feelings I have? Why am I treated this way by the world? We put words to them as a collective because no adult is giving us words that accurately describe our experience, so it's funny and wondrous



watching these girls in Ming's play try to put language to the mystery of growing up as a woman.

TS: What do you find most challenging about staging the play in the *Underground*? Is it the space itself?

TR: Yes, the space is going to be an enormous challenge because we travel in time and location. We go from the characters being seven years old to being 30 years old. We jump from a playground to a bathroom to a basement (any many places in between!). The set designer, Arnulfo Maldonado, and I are excited about finding a way to do it in that small space. What I like about the space is its forced intimacy. We're going to be looking at these girls very close up, and I think that's incredibly important.

TS: I want to talk about the relationship between Kyeoung and Anna. It feels like that is the one relationship that has a beginning, middle, and end among the girls, and there's a sexual overtone to it.

TR: The relationship between Anna and Kyeoung is incredibly complicated, and the sexual overtones are there. Sexual exploration is common between groups of girls growing up but very rarely dramatized! I don't know what it's like to be a young boy in the world, but I certainly know what it's like to be a young girl. As a young girl growing up with a group of other young girls, you are exploring your sexual identity together. You feel certain things. You're experimenting. Nobody is telling you anything, so who do you have to turn to except each other? That can create certain feelings and certain connections that are not articulated. It's very beautiful, natural, and joyful. And then



Tyne Rafaeli and playwright Ming Peiffer in rehearsal for *Usual Girls*
Photo: Jenny Anderson



Tyne Rafaeli in rehearsal
for *Usual Girls*
Photo: Jenny Anderson

society starts to work its way between these two girls, and separation happens as they are trying to survive and identify with groups of people that they think will protect them. A kind of tribalism starts to set in. It wedges a gap between these two girls that goes to a very extreme place, but it is this kind of thing that we all share. We all start together in the sandbox, and then this differentiation and distinction starts to happen, and that can be cruel and painful. I guess the question the play is asking is, “Is it necessary?”

TS: I love this word “tribal.” One of the things that seems tribal in the play to me is this casual racism towards Kyeoung.

TR: I think it’s expertly woven into the play. It adds a whole other level when you have an Asian-American female protagonist. The play wrestles with being an Asian-American woman in the world and how people perceive you sexually, and also how you perceive yourself in terms of standards of beauty. We have elevated and made primary white European standards of beauty, which has caused enormous problems. Being a young Asian-American girl and trying to fit into those ideals is a very painful and complicated experience.

TS: Can you talk about the development process? How did that work?

TR: The play has changed and shifted significantly since Ming and I have been working together. Some of it has been purely dramaturgical, some of it has been in response to how the world has shifted. I think the hardest question Ming and I have grappled with—that I’m sure we will continue to grapple with—is, can a female story be triumphant? We have come to the conclusion that the act of articulation is the triumph. The act of speaking about our experiences is the triumph. That’s what we’ve experienced with #MeToo in the last year. Have we solved gender discrimination in the world? Absolutely not. It’s a work in progress, but the active articulation that we have experienced in the last year—hearing these women’s stories, people feeling like they can talk about their own experience, talk about their oppression, talk about what they go through on a daily basis—that is an act of triumph for us.

That is what Ming and I also feel about the play. Active articulation is the triumph. And that’s something we are working on making clear in the play.

TS: What traits did you need from the actors in order to cast this play? Obviously you need actors who can play various ages, but what else were you looking for in casting?

TR: The casting process was very important. It was crucial that we have the right spirits at the center of this play, and I’m thrilled by the actors that we’ve been able to find. We needed actors who have a very open relationship to the universe, who are incredibly intelligent without being too knowing. There’s a purity that makes the play very, very funny. You can’t approach this play with cynicism, you can’t approach it with acidity.

TS: What keeps you inspired as an artist?

TR: Oh, my God, that’s a very complicated question. On the deepest level, what inspires me as an artist are acts of courage. Courage in both the artistic and personal realm. I think that’s what I am moved by. On a practical level, I definitely go into the world of dance and into the world of film to get a lot of inspiration. I go into the visual medium of film and the physical medium of dance to shake things up in my own work.

TS: Do you have advice for a young person who wants to direct for the theatre?

TR: I would say two things instinctively. One, to be a great director I think you have to be a student of the universe. So, I encourage you to travel, to read, to look at other cultures and how they create and what their practices are, before perhaps getting a formal training. And then the second thing is, there is no one path to doing what we do, which is enormously liberating and frustrating. Sometimes it’s helpful to have a path, but with directing, there really isn’t one. Listening to one’s own instinct and not allowing too much noise in is very important. •

PURITANS TO PUSSY HATS: CHANGING SEXUAL NORMS IN AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE

THE PURITANS

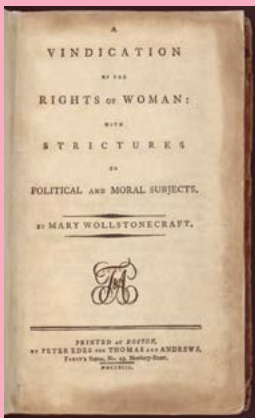
Though the Puritans arrived almost 400 years ago, aspects of their culture, including the desire to repress public displays of sexuality, continue to inform American society. Puritan villagers belonged to a single church and resisted the intrusion of outsiders. Relying on mutual surveillance, they sought communal unity and frequently took each other to court on charges of moral violations in order to suppress deviance. They controlled individual behavior through fierce gossip and public punishments, like whipping, use of the stockade, and the infamous scarlet letter for adulterers.



The Puritans put people in the stockade in the public square to humiliate and punish individuals for not following the rules of the community.

VOICES OF CHANGE

Ideas about female sexuality have changed dramatically over the last two centuries, when, frustrated at being thought of as property, women began to demand legal and personal rights.



In 1792, British author **Mary Wollstonecraft** published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: with Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects*, in which she argued that women should be formally educated and that men should be held to the same sexual standards as women.

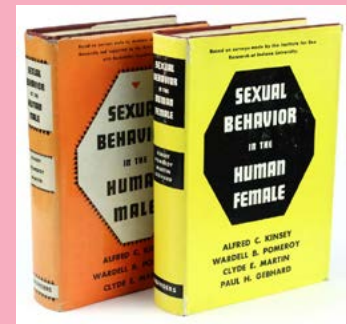
Sigmund Freud lived from 1856-1923, and his theories and research methods were as controversial during his life as they remain today. He theorized that neuroses are the result of sexual desires from early childhood that have been repressed from conscious awareness but continue to impact personality. Freud believed a woman's life was dominated by her reproductive functions and that "hysteria" was the result of women repressing their sexual desires.

At Indiana University in the 1940s, **Alfred Kinsey** and his research team set out to understand the actual sexual behavior of Americans. He conducted interviews with thousands of people and wrote detailed "sexual histories" of each. He introduced Americans to the "Kinsey Scale," the idea that people do not fit into exclusive heterosexual

or homosexual categories and sexuality exists on a continuum.

In 1960, the Federal Drug Administration approved the birth control pill. **Betty Friedan's** 1963 book *The Feminine Mystique* argued against the notion that it was a woman's destiny to marry and bear children. 1967 brought about the "Summer of Love," a "Human Be-In" that ushered the hippie way of life to the forefront of American media. In 1968, New York Radical Women protested the Miss America pageant because of its stereotypical notions of female sexuality, throwing bras, high heels, and other trappings of femininity into the "freedom trash cans".

Dan Savage's sex-advice column, *Savage Love*, has been going strong since the early 1990s. Savage, a self-described "deviant of the highest order," encourages sex-positivity and sexual interactions where consenting parties strive to be "GGG": good in bed, giving of equal time and pleasure to your partner, and game for anything within reason. In 2010, he founded the It Gets Better Project, an internet-based effort committed to creating a world "where all LGBTQ+ are free to live equally and know their worthiness and power as individuals."



The Kinsey Reports profoundly changed Americans' perceptions and understanding of human sexuality.
Photo: Fine Editions Ltd.



Warning: This article contains mature content and language describing sexuality.
It is intended for audiences ages 16 and older.



Breaking through in the mid-1990s, the Spice Girls sang, danced, and lived their lives with the motto of “girl power.”
Photo: Martin

SEXUALITY IN THE 1990S

The 1990s, when the characters of *Usual Girls* are coming of age, can be seen as a decade celebrating female sexuality. Pamela Anderson posing in *Playboy* was marketed as a sign of female empowerment. Britney Spears came on the scene in her Catholic schoolgirl skirt and tied up white shirt. Lil' Kim released *Hard Core*, and a week later Foxy Brown dropped *Ill Na Na*, both brazenly celebrating their sexuality through uncensored rhymes.

But in the 1990s many women who were seen as too angry, too ambitious, or too sexual, were also maligned in the media. Feminist Allison Yarrow coined the term “bitchification” to explain this process of reducing women “to their sexual function in order to thwart their progress.” White House intern Monica Lewinsky, after participating in sexual activity with a man in a position of power over her and 27 years her senior, was reduced to a punchline.

PUSSYHATS AND THE PRESENT

During a 2016 presidential debate, the Republican candidate called his opponent a “nasty woman”—just a few weeks after *The Washington Post* released tapes from 2005 in which he boasted that he can get away with grabbing women “by the pussy.” In response, over a million craftivists donned pink “Pussyhats”™ and marched on Washington in January 2017.

Public discussions of pubic hair and the political implications of how a woman grooms herself can be found everywhere from “Keeping up With the Kardashians” to magazines at the checkout stand. TV commercials advertise lingerie, vaginal lubricants, condoms, and adult toys. Nevertheless, puritanical norms still abound. Abstinence-only education programs, though



In 1991, instead of focusing on the sexual harassment accusations Anita Hill made against eventual Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, his confirmation hearings focused on Hill’s character.

Third-wave feminism, a phrase introduced in 1992 by Rebecca Walker partly in response to the silencing of Anita Hill, took hold in popular culture. This period in feminism also embraced sex-positivity and Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw’s concept of intersectional feminism—the idea that multiple identifiers are essential in understanding an individual’s experience of the world. **The Riot Grrrl** movement combined these feminist ideas with punk music and culture to start a “girl riot” against a society that offered no validation of women’s experiences and held a narrow view of beauty and sexuality. In 1993, thanks to student activists at Ohio’s Antioch College, the country’s first “yes means yes” policy was enacted, making verbal affirmative consent necessary at every step of a sexual interaction.

proven ineffective, prevail. Purity rings and chastity club ceremonies publicly celebrate waiting until marriage to have sexual intercourse. While the media titillate consumers with sexual imagery, so often the message young women receive is that female sexuality is bad or dirty—that a woman should appeal to sex partners, but not actually engage in sex and certainly not enjoy it. Four hundred years after the Puritans’ ships docked in these shoals, Puritanical values linger in America’s soul.



The Pussyhat™ was created in 2016 by Krista Suh and Jayna Zweiman, to de-stigmatize the word “pussy” and transform it into a symbol of empowerment.

INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR MIDORI FRANCIS

Education Dramturg Ted Sod spoke with actor Midori Francis about her work on *Usual Girls*.

Ted Sod: Where were you born and educated? When and why did you decide you wanted to become an actor? Did you have any teachers who had a profound influence on you?

Midori Francis: I was born and raised in New Jersey where both sets of my grandparents reside and much of my extended family. By the age of six, I was set on performance. I blame it on the *Annie* record my aunt used to play in my grandparents' living room. I'd stand on the coffee table or by the fireplace or on the couch—they would become a stage, and they transported me somewhere else.

I believe a good teacher can change a life. The first person to do this for me was Mrs. Blackmore in fifth grade. I didn't really fit in with my peers at that time, but Mrs. Blackmore created an environment where that didn't matter. She encouraged me as a writer and as a person. It was as if she saw something in me that other people couldn't. I remember reading the note she left in my yearbook over and over. "Midori is a beautiful young woman who expresses herself through writing." I couldn't believe someone I admired so much thought so highly of me. And there was, of course, my first acting professor in college, Kevin Kittle. He is responsible for every part of me that refuses to fail or to quit. He helped me find a higher standard for myself and for my work. He was the first person who ever looked at me and saw an artist. There are no words for that! I'm very grateful for the technique he taught me and the craft I learned from him at Rutgers.

TS: Why did you choose to play the role of Kyeoung in Ming Peiffer's *Usual Girls*?

MF: I met Ming about two-and-a-half years ago at an Asian theatre event. She reached out to me on a whim to do a workshop of the thesis project she was working on at the time at Columbia. It would be unpaid and a very big time commitment, but I said yes. I read it, and it was unlike anything else I had seen. I have done several workshops and readings of this play over the last two-and-a-half years, and it never gets old for me. I feel like I've been waiting for someone to write a role like this for me, and then one day it just appeared. Kyeoung is messy and strong and she is at the center of the story. You hardly ever see a character like this in NYC theatre: a character like this who happens to be Asian.

TS: What do you find most challenging or exciting about this role? Can you give us a window into your process with director Tyne Rafaeli?

MF: The challenging and exciting part about Kyeoung is playing her from the ages of an elementary school student to adulthood. I like when there is magic involved, and I think when you are transforming yourself in front of an audience like that—and if it is done well—it feels a bit like magic. The task at hand is how to do that with honesty and courage and to track an entire life in less than 90 minutes. It feels like jumping off a diving board when you've been standing by in your bathing suit for a very long time, but I do feel ready.

Tyne Rafaeli, the director, came on board in January of 2017. She is so wildly smart and emotionally in tune with things. She creates such a



Midori Francis

safe and nurturing environment for actors. When you get matched with someone like Tyne, you feel very lucky. Her brain power is fueled by something a bit outside the box, and I always want to meet her there. You can feel how she's drawing from a million different sources and that there is a larger world informing her. I also feel that if I am floating around somewhere outside the truth, she knows how to find me and bring me back.

TS: What do you think the play is about? This play seems to tackle the idea that there is casual racism in states like Ohio in the United States. Do you agree?

MF: It's about growing up in a society that decides many things for you based on your gender and race. It's about the home you were born into. It feels exhilarating and in-your-face, hopeful and sad. It's just about this girl growing up. And at the end you kind of feel like, "Well, yeah, why shouldn't we care about that?" If I had to count the coming of age stories about boys... (crinkled face emoji). I don't think racism is ever casual to the person who experiences it, but I think what you and many other people are commenting on is how the racism just creeps up on you and isn't talked about. I think that's because Ming wrote it and Ming is half-Asian like me. We both grew up in very white areas of this country. I didn't grow up in Ohio, but there is racism everywhere. All of those moments of public shame and otherness shaped who we are, but we are also not defined by it. That's why this play is so special. One day you are on the playground and someone calls you a "chink" or a "Jap," and then the day moves on, and you have this really strong, really wrong feeling deep inside of your gut, but then you have to go



Abby Corrigan and Midori Francis in rehearsal for *Usual Girls*
Photo: Jenny Anderson

home to see your family or your friends and you start talking about dogs. Life just keeps going on.

TS: Can you talk about the relationship between Kyeoung and Anna? What thoughts about it are you willing to share at this point in your process?

MF: It's a beautiful friendship rooted in playfulness. I think girls don't get to be silly enough. But we are so silly. And I've seen the reaction from women who watch Anna and I talk about cursing and sex and delight in rolling around with our stuffed animals. It's like everyone just exhales. We all know what that is. We just don't see it onstage or talk about it too often. I think there is such a regularity to Kyeoung and Anna's friendship that it just demands its own power. It is very intimate and very primal. You get to see two people navigate the waters of what it is to grow up female and it is both marvelous and scary.

TS: Are there any roles other than Kyeoung that you are eager to play on stage?

MF: I love the characters who aren't perceived as "normal." I like when plays feel a bit dangerous and expansive. There's this play called *Pitchfork Disney* by Phillip Ridley. I'd love to play either of the male roles in it, and I think it would be an interesting production if women played the two men. The dialogue is simultaneously coarse and milky and feels a bit surreal. I definitely have a fascination with how people use fantasy as a lifeline to escape and characters who are haunted by their childhoods. I like plays where the audience gets stuck somewhere with the characters. I'd like to play a female Alex in *Clockwork Orange*. Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* would be a fun challenge. I'd like to attempt an iconic female role like that while I'm still young.

TS: What keeps you inspired as an artist?

MF: Running outside. Music. Listening to strangers talk and interact with other strangers. Seeing a good movie or a play with someone I know involved. Podcasts. Reading science articles or articles about recent psychological experiments that have taken place at research

centers and universities. Any time I feel bored, I just look at research on how human beings behave and all the people who have devoted their entire lives to finding out why. It makes me feel less alone in my non-understanding. I like to also watch strangers having a good time. I'll sometimes just watch people ice skating or skateboarding and take that in for a moment. I also love kids. I've been a babysitter for years and find childcare to be extremely rewarding. Kids operate from a place of newness, so everything becomes a creative venture since they don't have reference points. As you get older, you have so many reference points for everything that you forget how to see. Whenever I feel bored or uncreative, it's normally because I'm not taking anything in. Our sensory world has endless gifts for us to enjoy if we stay open to it.

TS: NYC school students will read this interview and will want to know what it takes to be a working actress—what advice can you give young people who want to act?

MF: Make sure you sit down and think about why you want to do it. Once you decide to make this your living, it is not as easy to go back and change paths. I know many people who went to college for acting who were on the fence about it when they started, and now they are on the fence about it in the real world. This is not a casual pursuit. You really have to want it. There has to be something in you that needs or craves it, and pushes you towards it. For me, acting has been the one thing I can fail at over and over, but I still get up again. I still want to do it. And I think that is the reason I'm out here working. It's really beyond my control. I was just drawn to it, and I would hope any young person thinking of pursuing a career in the arts would have this kind of passion because it's not an easy profession and it is the love for it that gets you through. I think training is essential. I recommend a BFA program, so you can also get a college education, but there are also great acting studios and classes in New York. Do your research. Ask questions. Don't focus on getting rich and famous. Focus on the work. Focus on how you can be a better artist and a full person. Find out what moves you and work on it. Read plays with your friends. Experience everything. •

FRIENDS, FOES, AND FITTING IN: ADOLESCENT SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

As Kyeoung makes her way from childhood to adulthood, she faces adversity not just from boys and men who treat her as an object, but also, importantly, from her female peers who befriend Kyeoung at a young age but grow to demonize her for her sexual behavior and exclude her from their social circles. Social dynamics like the ones seen in *Usual Girls* have been the subject of a great deal of research in the field of social psychology, which has worked to illuminate the forces behind those adolescent behaviors that can become aggressive, exclusionary, and hurtful.

CLIQUE S AND HIERARCHIES

Popular television and films tend to depict cliques as easily-definable categorizations of students in a high school or middle school: the “jocks,” the “nerds,” the “popular kids,” the “outcasts,” and so on. While cliques certainly arise from school classes and clubs, and often group together students of similar interests and demographics, they are not always as easy to spot as popular culture would have us believe. A **clique** is defined as any group of people who spend time together as friends and actively disallow others from joining their circle. The element of exclusion is the primary feature that distinguishes a clique from a looser group or pair of friends, and it gives rise to **social hierarchies**—that is, systems that rank people one above another.

Leaders of the clique may exert power by using positive or “prosocial” behaviors—such as cooperation, aid, and reciprocity—as well as with coercive tactics, like manipulation, deceit, and threats. A school environment can also give rise to hierarchies of cliques themselves, with “high-status” cliques of the most popular students—such as the girls who gang up on Kyeoung after her volleyball

practice—often employing various forms of aggression to maintain their social status and visibility.

SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

A deeper dive into the psychology of cliques reveals a broader sociological theory of intergroup behavior—that is, behavior that takes place between groups of people—called **social identity theory**. Developed by social psychologists Henri Tajfel and John Turner in the 1970s and ‘80s, social identity theory explores the degree to which a person’s inclusion in their social groups—cliques, schools, communities, nations, and so on—contributes to their internal concept of self, and how this identification with social groups leads people to treat those outside of their own group.

Tajfel and Turner’s research revealed that, as people jockey for a more “positive” social identity either by endeavoring to raise the social status of their own group, or by moving to a different group altogether, they tend to behave competitively and discriminatorily against those in different groups, regardless of how little they may know those people as individuals. Furthermore, when a person feels strongly about the social status of their own group, they will often act in the best interest of the group as a whole, even if that means doing things that are at odds with their own self-interest or behaving in a manner very different from how they normally would.

Early studies into social identity theory found common patterns of intergroup behavior between such real-world groups as the deeply divided Catholic and Protestant populations of Northern Ireland, black and white residents

HIERARCHIES WITHIN CLIQUES:

LEADERS:
ONE OR MORE PEOPLE, TEND TO
BE VERY SOCIALLY VISIBLE

SECOND TIER OF LEADERSHIP:
SUPPORT CLIQUE LEADERS BUT ARE
OFTEN LESS WELL-KNOWN

FOLLOWERS:
HAVE LITTLE POWER IN THE GROUP





Sofia Black-D'Elia, Ryann Redmond, Midori Francis and Ali Rose Dachtis in rehearsal for *Usual Girls*
Photo: Jenny Anderson

in American housing projects, and linguistic enclaves in Switzerland, among others. Teen cliques are just one kind of group that can be described by social identity theory, and Tajfel and Turner's framework can be very helpful in understanding Kyeoung's relationships to her peers.

FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN FEMALES

On a more intimate level than cliques, the one-on-one friendships that Kyeoung forges over the course of *Usual Girls* provide her healthy environments for navigating her young adulthood but also lead to painful breaches of trust. Psychological research into adolescent friendships in recent decades has identified behavioral patterns that are specific to friendships between females. While this research does not describe all female friendships categorically, the patterns studied can help explain how friendships between girls are unique both in their benefits and in their challenges.

Studies have shown that, compared to friendships between males, friendships between females tend to become more intimate and involve more sharing of personal information. Female friendships are more likely to exist independently of larger groups than male friendships; this "isolation" can also encourage greater intimacy and lead to more meaningful

bonds between females as compared to those between adolescent males. Physical intimacy, which often arises out of this emotional closeness, can lead to behaviors such as hand-holding, cuddling, and other acts that are traditionally associated with romantic relationships.

This intimacy can also, however, make conflict more fierce when it arises between female friends, especially if the private information that has been shared in confidence is maliciously spread to others. Because female friendships are more likely to exist independently of larger groups, the absence of a larger circle of peers to mitigate any potential conflicts can lead to harsher fights. Conflicts in female friendships tend to be more intense than those in males', and girls are more likely than boys to terminate friendships altogether, or "friend break up," which Kyeoung experiences firsthand in *Usual Girls*.

As decades of studies in social psychology have shown, Kyeoung is not at all alone in her struggle for social acceptance and friendship. Adolescents across the country and around the world experience many similar social pressures, transitions, and fears. •

DISCRIMINATION, TRAUMA, AND THE BRAIN

"I just....Don't really like you. You have a weird sense of humor.
You dress kinda strange. And whether or not you mean to be? You're a slut."

—Lindsey, *Usual Girls*

BELONGING

Social belonging—the feeling that one is a valued member of a group or community—is fundamental to the human experience. Humans across the globe define themselves by the groups to which they belong. Scientific studies have shown that individuals who don't feel that they fit in suffer from higher levels of depression and other mental health issues.

During the teen years young people begin to differentiate who they are from who they are taught to be. It's normal for adolescents to experiment with all aspects of their identity, from religious background to sexuality to academic interests, as they work out how they fit into society. Feeling safe and valued in the community allows individuals to emerge from the teen years with a strong sense of self and an ability to form relationships.

RACE IN WHITE SPACES

The protagonist of *Usual Girls*, Kyeong, grows up in Upper Arlington, a wealthy suburb of Columbus, Ohio, in the 1980s and 90s. As a Korean-American in a predominantly white enclave, she experiences microaggression—indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against her as an Asian woman—from her friends. When Kyeong's friends refer to their nipples as "normal pink," as compared to Kyeong's brown nipples, that's a microaggression.

In contrast, Kyeong's bullies are deliberately racist in their attacks: they use racial slurs (like "chink cooties") and damaging stereotypes to try to make her feel inferior. When they mispronounce her name, they invalidate her experience as an American and the value of her cultural identity. When they suggest her mother was a "mail-order bride," they draw on stereotypes of Asian women as submissive and hypersexualized.

Minority teens who grow up in predominantly white spaces experience feelings of alienation and may not feel that they belong in their environment. They may also experience confusion about their cultural identity and the value of that identity in the wider community. One recent survey of teen

girls showed that 59% felt percent like outsiders because of their appearance, while 13% felt left out because of race.

EFFECTS ON PHYSICAL HEALTH

Negative experiences impact mental and physical health for life: each time someone is exposed to a microaggression, racist comment, or traumatizing experiences (like dealing with an alcoholic parent), their body releases stress hormones, which can, over time, lead to increased risk for anxiety, coronary heart disease, inflammatory disorders, and cognitive impairment.

EFFECTS ON BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

Belonging to a supportive, healthy peer group is crucial during the teen years because lifelong neurological patterns are established in the human brain during that time. At the start of puberty, the part of the brain that controls planning and decision-making is like an overgrown bush, with sticks and leaves going all directions, while the part of the brain that controls emotional and sexual responses is almost fully developed. Because of this imbalance, teenagers are biologically driven to try to fit into their peer group and likely to engage in risky behavior in order to do so.

During this time, the brain is plastic, which means it can change and learn quickly. From about the age of 12 to 25, the brain develops by choosing which areas and connections to strengthen and which to prune back. Teenagers in a safe, stable environment learn to regulate their emotions and form authentic relationships, while teenagers in a hostile environment show a weaker set of connections within the brain overall and develop the areas of the brain related to hypervigilance to threats.

THE FUTURE

In adulthood, individuals (like the unnamed Woman in *Usual Girls*) often question what their formative experiences taught them and how they connect to their present choices. Fortunately, even in full maturity, the brain retains its capacity to change. This allows us to change behavior and make new choices that are more beneficial to ourselves and our relationships with others. •

COMING OF AGE ON STAGE

Leaving childhood can be treacherous. Filled with change and uncertainty, adolescence swiftly and ungracefully delivers us to new and frightening terrain. While this journey is unique to everyone, experiences like heartache, joy, and sorrow repeat themselves throughout our lives and, for many writers, onto the page, as they try their best to make sense of them. Playwrights have always artistically grappled with growing up, and Ming Peiffer's *Usual Girls* is no exception. Below is a selection of plays that also try to navigate the no-man's-land of coming of age.

SPRING AWAKENING (1906)

Frank Wedekind's play, groundbreaking in its approach to adolescence, follows a group of teenagers and examines how well-meaning adults in their lives fail them, triggering unprepared consequences. Moritz dies by suicide after receiving bad marks; Wendla becomes pregnant and then dies during her mother's attempt to provide her an abortion; and Melchior, sent to a reformatory after being expelled, struggles to reckon with the loss of his childhood.



John Kerr, as troubled schoolboy Tom, and Deborah Kerr, as house mother Laura, embrace in Vincente Minnelli's 1956 film adaptation of *Tea and Sympathy*.

TEA AND SYMPATHY (1953)

Robert Anderson's play presents Tom Lee, a sensitive boy who is at odds with his brash, masculine classmates. The bullying intensifies when the other boys, perturbed by Tom's effeminate nature and possible homosexuality, try to force him into "manliness." Laura Reynolds, the wife of one of Tom's teachers, observes this with alarm and decides to intervene, offering herself up as a potential object for Tom's desire. The play's final line, spoken by Laura, remains iconic: "Years from now, when you speak of this, and you will, be kind."

HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE (1998)

Paula Vogel's Obie award-winning play serves as a crinkled, cryptic roadmap to an interrupted girlhood. Feeling

like the family's misfit, Li'l Bit turns to her dashing Uncle Peck for guidance and companionship. The two bond over driving lessons, and Peck teaches Li'l Bit everything he knows. However, Peck's attentions soon turn predatory, and when grown-up Li'l Bit reflects on this conflicting relationship, her memories prompt us to think about sexuality, identity, and how secrets build when buried in the body.

MARCUS; OR, THE SECRET OF SWEET (2010)

In the last play of his *Brother/Sister* trilogy, Tarell Alvin McCraney tells the story of 16-year-old Marcus Eshu, living in the fictional town of San Pere, Louisiana. In a world infused with Yoruba mythology, set in "the distant present," Marcus begins to experiment with being "sweet" — a historically black Southern slang word for "gay." Missing his father and feeling at odds with his surroundings, Marcus fumbles for love and a place to call his own in the days directly preceding Hurricane Katrina.

DRY LAND (2015)

Ruby Rae Spiegel's brutal and intimate glimpse into teenage girlhood takes us to a high school locker room in present-day Florida, where we meet 16-year-old, pregnant Amy and lonely transfer-student Ester, united by swim-team membership. As the girls strategize about home-abortion tactics, they talk about typical teen things, too: feeling isolated, the way kisses taste, what college life might hold. •



Teagan Rose (front) and Connor Kelly-Eiding, in Echo Theater Company's 2017 production of *Dry Land*.

INTERVIEW WITH SET DESIGNER ARNULFO MALDONADO

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Set Designer Arnulfo Maldonado about his work on *Usual Girls*.

Ted Sod: How did you respond to *Usual Girls* when you first read it?

Arnulfo Maldonado: I was very much struck by its directness. This play has zero fluff, so it was important for me to also approach the design with that same directness. This is a play that sees a woman's (in this case, Kyeoung's) journey/transformation from a very early age through young adulthood. What are the events in our young lives that shape us to be who we are as adults, especially for a young woman of color?

TS: Does the play have personal resonance for you?

AM: It's personal in that I think we all grapple with our own identity and our own place in the world; I certainly believe that my own personal journey through the murky waters of adolescence, coming to grips with my own sexuality, understanding what it meant to be a minority—those are parts of me that were very much shaped by the people in my life, in school, the social groups I was attracted to, the social groups I avoided. It's equal parts exciting for me because this is the third play this season in which I am creating a world for an almost exclusively female ensemble—*School Girls; Or the African Mean Girls Play* by Jocelyn Bioh at MCC, and *Dance Nation* by Clare Barron at Playwrights Horizons being the others.

TS: What kind of research did you have to do in order to design the set?

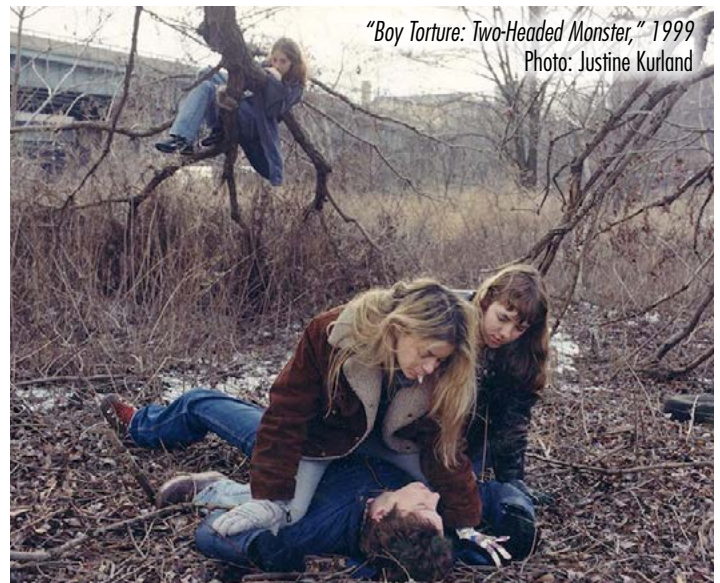
AM: The rawness of the play reminded me of Nan Goldin photographs, her unapologetic documentation of intimacy. That led to discovering other photographers whose work focuses on capturing teenage/young adult intimacy, like Justine Kurland and David Stewart and Olivia Bee, who documented her own adolescence in a book entitled *Kids In Love*. Bee's use of color felt slightly surreal and right for the tone of the play. That led to looking at more sculptural-based work, like that of Alex De Corte. And, of course, looking at photographs of grade schools, middle schools, high schools...the architecture and makeup of these spaces. The geography of these types of institutions includes very vulnerable/open spaces, like a parking lot (where one waits for a ride after school, for instance). It was important to retain that openness in the design because that waiting time/space wants to feel slightly scary. There's nowhere for you to hide, nowhere for you to retreat to.

TS: How are you collaborating with the director, Tyne Rafaeli? Please give us a window into your process as a set designer.

AM: This is my third collaboration with Tyne, and what's great about a recurring relationship is that you pick up on what helps each of you connect with the piece. Tyne shared with me a visual that felt right in terms of the vulnerability of the space, but also possesses a slight eeriness and seduction to it, that ultimately led me to make the connection between the work of photographers like Olivia Bee and visual artists like Alex De Corte. That was the key image that opened up the possibilities of the space.

TS: What were the challenges in designing the set for this show?

AM: This is my third show in the Underground space (I also designed



"Boy Torture: Two-Headed Monster," 1999
Photo: Justine Kurland

Kingdom Come by Jenny Rachel Weiner and last season's *Bobbie Clearly* by Alex Lubischer), so I have become well acquainted with the challenges of the space. With a play like *Usual Girls*, which also takes place in multiple locations, it was important to strip the design to the bare essentials and at the same time retain some of the eeriness and excitement of the visuals. The floor felt especially important: we thought to use a similar rubber flooring found on playgrounds because we first see these women on a playground at a very early age playing a game involving not falling into molten lava. Similar games are played, more emotional ones, as they get older, but the floor remains constant—this felt especially right. As you'll see, there is one wall that transforms subtly to allow the room to feel slightly more expansive at times—sometimes it becomes a reflective space, and at other times it becomes a retreat/protective space. Kyeoung can sometimes feel in control of this space, sometimes lost. This ever-shifting wall feels important in terms of connecting it with how the world itself shifts around her, and at times it can be pleasant, and at others you're staring at yourself in a mirror and it can be quite painful. •



Girls bedroom anti social from *Teenage Pre-occupation*
Photo: David Stewart



USUAL GIRLS INTRODUCTION TO OHIO:

Get to know a few key elements of Kyeoung’s childhood and what it was like for her to grow up in Ohio.

UPPER ARLINGTON OHIO

Upper Arlington is a city in Franklin County, Ohio, United States, on the northwest side of the Columbus metropolitan area

GREENSVIEW ELEMENTARY

Greensview Elementary School was built in 1965 and serves approximately 460 students in kindergarten through grade five in the most north and northeastern portions of the community. Greenville Elementary is

a predominantly white institution, which is defined as institutions of higher learning in which 50% or greater of the student enrollment identify as White or Caucasian.

LIMITED TOO

Limited Too was a popular preteen girls fashion store from 1987 to 2008. The New Albany, Ohio-based teen clothing chain sold tween apparel, lifestyle accessories, and personal care products for girls ages 5–15. In the 1990s and early 2000’s, Limited Too dictated the trends in the Arlington and Columbus, Ohio areas. Although Limited Too storefronts can no longer be seen in malls across America, Limited Too fashions are still sold in its sister chain, Justice.

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

FOR
EDUCATORS

HOW DOES AN ACTOR INTERACT WITH A PROP IN ORDER TO REVEAL THE GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES OF A SCENE?

(Common Core Code: CSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.3)

Before seeing *Usual Girls*, students consider how material objects can communicate information about the setting and characters to an audience.

WRITE Ask students to write a detailed description of an object (something they could pick up and hold in their hands) they remember well from their elementary school years. (Place any constraints on object selection needed to make the activity safe for your classroom.) What was the object? How did it look? Feel? When and where did they encounter it? What memories are attached to the object?

EXCHANGE (OPTIONAL) Have students exchange descriptions and allow them time to read and ask clarifying questions of each other.

IMPROVISE Establish an improvisation space (or several around the classroom) that includes a table and a prop that can stand in for the objects described by students—perhaps a plain book or unlabeled jar or bottle. Working individually, students enter the improvisation space and discover the prop on the table. They improvise a silent scene lasting 30 to 60 seconds in which they interact with the prop, while a group of classmates observe. If desired, students can improvise a second round with a partner, in which two characters interact with an object.

REFLECT Guide the audience in a discussion of the scene they just saw: What do we think that prop was? How did the character feel about the prop? How did you know? What choices did the actor make to reveal the character's relationship to the prop? How does a story emerge from this silent scene?

HOW CAN AN ARTIST CREATE A STORYBOARD TO SHOW CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OVER THE PASSAGE OF TIME?

(Common Core Code: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3)

Before seeing *Usual Girls*, students analyze and articulate how a single character can respond differently to similar situations over time.

MATERIALS: Three “panels” of paper per student (can be a half-sheet of paper); pencils, pens, optional markers, colored pencils.

BRAINSTORM Ask students to free-write about a time in their life when they either: experienced bullying, felt excluded, noticed they were different from their peers, became conscious of their gender, or felt othered or excluded.

CREATE Students will take one of the previously discussed prompts and create a sketched storyboard with three panels that represent a fictional character over time. The first panel represents this character at age 7, the second panel shows this character at age 14, and the third panel depicts this character age at age 21. If desired, you may extend the project to create more panels for each age.

SHARE Conduct a gallery walk with all storyboards posted on the walls. Allow students to present their work and articulate a specific character choice shown on each storyboard, and why they made these choices.

REFLECT How does this character change when reacting to similar situations at different ages? How do your panels inform one another? What changed in the character as they matured? What choices did you make to help the viewer know that this story was about the same character even though there is a seven-year age gap between panels?

WRITE Optionally, extend the storyboard activity into dialogue writing, allowing the students to write scenes in pairs or on their own, based on the scenes on their panels.



POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

HOW CAN A THEATRE ARTIST EXPLORE ISSUES OF CONSENT?

(Common Core Code: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.B)

Playwright Ming Peiffer says in her interview on page 4-5 of this UPSTAGE Guide that “the entire play revolves around this question about how your formative years play out into who you become. And obviously, parental influence is an enormous factor in that.” This activity encourages students to theatricalize ways that consent can be modeled and taught in parent-child relationships.

- DISCUSS** To give consent means to give permission. Ask students to think about the play in terms of consent: Was it ever asked for? Was it granted? If not, how did the lack of consent impact the characters?
- RESEARCH** Break students into groups. Provide each group with a section of the article “Healthy Sex Talk: Teaching Consent Ages 1-21” from the Good Men Project (available [HERE](#)). Ask them to read all of the strategies for their age group and then focus on one strategy. Or you may assign groups a strategy, or cut them up and have each group draw one from a hat.
- IMPROVISE** Have students work in pairs and improvise a scene. One student is a parent, the other is a child in a select age group. The parent should model actions and strategies recommended by the article.
- SHARE** Have at least one group from each age range present their scene. As they watch, students in the audience should identify what successful actions the “parent” character used in the discussion.
- REFLECT** Ask students to analyze the scenes in terms of what they reveal about consent. Ask the room how they plan to contribute to creating a culture of consent as artists and members of the community.

HOW DOES A PLAYWRIGHT USE DIALOGUE AND ACTION TO DEFINE RELATIONSHIPS?

(Common Core Code: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.3.B)

After watching *Usual Girls*, students explore how a playwright builds character relationships.

- DISCUSS** As a group, discuss the relationship between the characters Kyeoung and Woman. You may wish to read and analyze this sample scene from the play [HERE](#). What was the relationship between Kyeoung and Woman? When did you realize this? How did playwright Ming Peiffer show this relationship? How did the dialogue and action of the play help you to discover this?
- WRITE** Working in pairs, ask students to create a character description and write a scene in which an older version of a character has a conversation their younger self. (If needed, the teacher can supply photographs or artwork of people to inspire character descriptions.)
- PERFORM** Allow a few groups to share their scenes with the class. In between scenes, have students guess the age gap between the characters and share observations on what makes the characters similar and how they have changed.
- REFLECT** How did students establish the relationship between these two characters? What are some other films, plays, or TV shows where we see an older version of a character interacting with their younger self? Why do we use this as a tool in storytelling?

RESOURCES

In response to the content of *Usual Girls*, below are resources for those in need of help and information.

NEW YORK CITY RESOURCES

- **NYC WELL:** Free, confidential support for depression, anxiety, substance abuse and more.
1-888-NYC-WELL Text "Well" to 65173 <https://nycwell.cityofnewyork.us/en/>
- **THE NYC YOUTHLINE:** Support and crisis intervention in many languages for youth, families and service providers.
1-800-246-4646 • <http://cap4kids.org/newyorkcity/118704360/>
- **NOW NYC MENTAL HEALTH & COUNSELING:** Referrals for free/low-cost mental health and counseling services.
<http://nownyc.org/service-fund/get-help/mental-health-counseling/>
- **NATIONAL SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE OPERATED BY RAINN:** Support for victims of sexual violence.
1-800-656-HOPE • <http://www.rainn.org/get-help/national-sexual-assault-hotline>
- **THE LAWS IN YOUR STATE: NEW YORK:** Information about New York's rape and assault laws.
<https://www.rainn.org/laws-your-state-new-york>

RESOURCES

- "7 Ways Childhood Adversity Can Change Your Brain." *Psychology Today*, Sussex Publishers.
- "Alcohol Facts and Statistics." National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2018. Web. Accessed 1 Sept 2018.
- "American Virgin: First-Time Sex Trends of U.S. Males and Females." *Superdrug Online Doctor*. Web. Accessed 1 Sept 2018.
- Augustyn, Adam. "Dan Savage." *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 5 Apr. 2018.
- Bellafante, Gina. "Men Will Be Men, but How Is the Question." *New York Times*, 17 March 2007.
- Benenson, Joyce F., and Athena Christakos. "The Greater Fragility of Females' Versus Males' Closest Same-Sex Friendships." *Child Development*, vol. 74, no. 4, 2003, pp. 1123-1129.
- Browning, Randle. "The Bitchified Decade We're Still Paying For." *Los Angeles Review of Books*, 9 Aug. 2018.
- "Child Sexual Abuse Statistics." *Darkness to Light: End Child Sexual Abuse*. Web. Accessed 1 Sept 2018.
- Closson, Leanna M. "Aggressive and Prosocial Behaviors within Early Adolescent Friendship Cliques: What's Status Got to Do with It?" *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 4, Oct. 2009, pp. 406-435.
- Cummings, William. "Americans agree sexual harassment is a problem. They just don't always agree on what it is." *USA TODAY*. Nov 18, 2017. Web. Accessed 1 Sept 2018.
- Dastagir, Alia E. "Microaggressions Don't Just 'Hurt Your Feelings'." *USA Today*, Gannett Satellite Information Network, 1 Mar. 2018.
- "Depression." *NYC Health*, NYC.gov. Web. Accessed 1 Sept 2018.
- Diamond, Lisa M. "Passionate Friendships Among Adolescent Sexual-Minority Women." *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2000, pp. 191-209.
- Dolan, Jill. "How I Learned to Drive (review)." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 50, no. 1, 1998, pp. 127-128.
- "Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey." *Kinseyinstitute.org*. Web. Accessed 1 Sept 2018.
- Evans, Everett. "Sensitive 'Tea and Sympathy' teaches lesson of acceptance." *Houston Chronicle*, 7 August 2013.
- "Executive Summary." *Report On the AAU Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct*. Association of American Universities. 2015. Web. Accessed 1 Sept 2018.
- Gates, Anita. "Shakespearean in a Down-Home Vernacular." *New York Times*, 29 May 2009.
- Gay, Roxane. "Fifty Years Ago, Protesters Took on the Miss America Pageant and Electrified the Feminist Movement." *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 1 Jan. 2018.
- Herbenick, Debby, and Dan Savage. "Savage Love Glossary." *The Stranger*. Web. Accessed 7 Sept 2018.
- Hnath, Lucas. "Finding Her Way to 'Dry Land.'" *American Theatre*, 2 Dec. 2015.
- Hutson, Matthew. "Are Americans Still Puritan?" *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 3 Aug. 2012.
- Indiana University. "No consensus in definitions of 'had sex,' study finds." *ScienceDaily*, 5 March 2010. Web. Accessed 1 Sept 2018.
- Jones, Gerald P., and Myron H. Dembo. "Age and Sex Role Differences in Intimate Friendships During Childhood and Adolescence." *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 4, 1989, pp. 445-462.
- "Making the Connection: Sexual Behaviors and Academic Grades." Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Web. 1 Sept 2018.
- Marsh, Hannah. "10 Spice Girls Lyrics That Define 'Girl Power' In The Best Way." *MORE: Entertainment*. Meredith Women's Group. Web. Accessed 6 September 2018.
- Martinez G, Copen CE and Abma JC. "Teenagers in the United States: sexual activity, contraceptive use, and childbearing, 2006-2010 National Survey of Family Growth." Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Vital and Health Statistics, 2011.
- "National Resources for Sexual Assault Survivors and Their Loved Ones | RAINN." *Adult Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse | RAINN*. Web. Accessed 6 September 2018.
- Menand, Louis. "Books as Bombs." *The New Yorker*, The New Yorker, 19 June 2017.
- "Mental Health Benefits When Teens 'Belong' at School." *Psychopaedia*, Australian Psychological Society, 3 Feb. 2017.
- "More women report having same-sex relationships." *Healthday*. CBS News. January 8, 2016. Web. Accessed 6 Sept 2018.
- Moss, Rebecca. "How Ruby Rae Spiegel's Play 'Dry Land' Confronts Abortion on Stage." *Elle*, 23 Oct. 2014.
- Musu-Gillette, L., Zhang, A., Wang K., Zhang, J., Oudekerk BA. *Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2016*. Institute of Educational Sciences, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2017. Web. Accessed 1 Sept 2018.
- Panko, Ben. "Racism Harms Children's Health, Survey Finds." *Smithsonian.com*, Smithsonian Institution, 5 May 2017.
- Pattiselanno, Kim, et al. "Structure Matters: The Role of Clique Hierarchy in the Relationship Between Adolescent Social Status and Aggression and Prosociality." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 44, no. 12, 2015, pp. 2257-2274.
- Rosario, Richy. "Writers Look Back on Foxy Brown & Lil Kim's Powerful Debuts 20 Years Later: They Were 'Milestones in Hip-Hop'." *Billboard*, Billboard, 11 Nov. 2016.
- Santelli, John S et al. "Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Policies and Programs: An Updated Position Paper of the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 61, no. 3, 2017, pp. 400-403.
- Sifferlin, Alexandra. "Why Teenage Brains Are So Hard to Understand." *Time*, Time, 8 Sept. 2017.
- Spinks, Sarah. "Adolescent Brains Are Works in Progress." *PBS*, Public Broadcasting Service. Web.
- Stöppler, Melissa Conrad. "Puberty." *MedicineNet*, May 7, 2018. Web. Accessed 1 Sept 2018.
- Tajfel, Henri. "Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations." *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 33, 1982, pp. 1-39.
- Tajfel, Henri, and John C. Turner. "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior." *Political Psychology: Key Readings*, edited by John T. Jost and Jim Sidanius, Psychology Press, 2004, pp. 276-293. Key Readings in Social Psychology.
- "The Pussyhat Story." *PUSSYHAT PROJECT™*. Web. Accessed 1 Sept 2016.
- Todd, Professor Janet. "History - British History in Depth: Mary Wallstonecraft: A 'Speculative and Dissenting Spirit'." *BBC*, BBC, 17 Feb. 2011.
- Thompson, Elisabeth Morgan. "Girl Friend or Girlfriend? Same-Sex Friendship and Bisexual Images as a Context for Flexible Sexual Identity Among Young Women." *Journal of Bisexuality*, vol. 6, no. 3, 2006, pp. 47-67.
- Thompson, Kirsten M.J. "A Brief History of Birth Control in the U.S." *Our Bodies Ourselves*, 14 Dec. 2013.
- "Tween Brands to scrap Limited Too brand" *Los Angeles Times*, 13 August, 2008. Web.
- "Understanding the Teen Brain." *Catalyst For Children*. Web. Accessed 6 Sept 2016.
- University Of Michigan. "Low Sense Of Belonging Is A Predictor Of Depression." *ScienceDaily*, 11 August 1999.
- "Upper Arlington Population and Demographics (Upper Arlington, OH)." *AreaConnect YellowPages and More*.
- Wedekind, Frank. *The Awakening of Spring: A Tragedy of Childhood*. Translated by Francis J. Ziegler, Brown Brothers, 1912.
- "What's The Average Age Of A Kid's First Porn Exposure?" *Fight the New Drug*. July 30, 2018. Web. Accessed 1 Sept 2018.
- Wiest, Brianna. "Psychologists Say That Belonging To a Fandom Is Amazing For Your Mental Health." *Teen Vogue*, TeenVogue.com, 20 July 2017.
- "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2015." *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*. Center For Disease Controls and Prevention. June 10, 2016.
- Zhou, Connie. "The Asian-American Awakening: That Moment When You Realize You're Not White." *The Huffington Post*, TheHuffingtonPost.com, 2 June 2017.

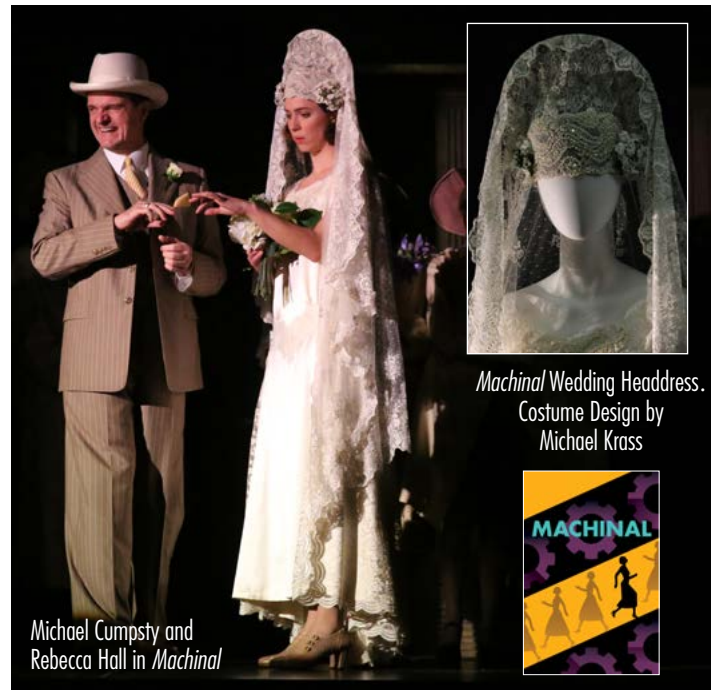


ABOUT ROUNDABOUT

ROUNDABOUT ARCHIVES

PEEKING THROUGH THE CURTAIN: STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Roundabout's archives contain documentation from our past productions and provide an insider's look at our 53-year history. With *Usual Girls*—a new play by the playwright Ming Peiffer—we have an opportunity to look back at some of our past women playwrights. We have staged productions by writers as diverse as Carson McCullers (*The Member of the Wedding*), Lorraine Hansberry (*A Raisin in the Sun*), Clare Boothe Luce (*The Women*), Theresa Rebeck (*The Understudy* and, currently on our American Airlines stage, *Bernhardt/Hamlet*), Lynn Nottage (*Intimate Apparel*), and Paula Vogel (*The Mineola Twins*). Perhaps one of the more arresting productions of our recent past was Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal*, a powerful play (based on convicted murderer Ruth Snyder) that investigated the deeply restrictive roles of women in the early 20th century. Peiffer's play ushers in an exciting new voice that trains our eye on the lives of today's young woman and the roles she inhabits and ultimately pushes up against.



Machinal Wedding Headdress.
Costume Design by
Michael Krass

Michael Cumpsty and
Rebecca Hall in *Machinal*

For more information on the Roundabout Archives, visit <https://archive.roundabouttheatre.org> or contact Tiffany Nixon, Roundabout Archivist, at archives@roundabouttheatre.org

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: INTERVIEW WITH NICK MECIKALSKI, ARTISTIC ASSOCIATE

Tell us about yourself. Where were you born and educated? How and when did you become Artistic Associate?

Nick Mecikalski: I was born in Madison, Wisconsin, and when I was ten, my family moved to a suburb of Huntsville, Alabama (coincidentally also called Madison). I attended Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and during my four years in school I spent a summer and semester away at the National Theater Institute (NTI) at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut. The time I spent at NTI was incredibly transformative for me. NTI solidified my decision to pursue a career in theatre, specifically in playwriting. I kept writing throughout college, but in the latter half of my senior year, my plans for my first post-grad summer—a production of a play of mine with a small company here in New York—fell through. At the last minute, I applied for the Artistic Internship here at Roundabout and ended up getting the job. After the internship, I worked at Abrams Artists Agency before returning to Roundabout in early 2017 as the Artistic Assistant. My title changed to Artistic Associate in September 2018.

TS: Describe your job at RTC. What are your responsibilities?

NM: There are two distinct parts to this position, which operate two very different sides of my brain. On one side, I assist Todd Haimes and the department overall by managing calendars, facilitating meetings, coordinating Opening Night invitations and seating, overseeing Tony Voter bookings, and organizing various other artistic affairs. On the other side, I function in a literary and dramaturgical capacity for the department: reading scripts, attending readings around the city,

completing coverage for play submissions, writing UPSTAGE articles, and drafting content for playbills.

TS: What is the best part of your job? What is the hardest part?

NM: That these two separate sets of responsibilities coexist in the same position is my favorite part of coming to work. The first set of responsibilities excites the part of me that minored in Computer Science in college; the second thrills me creatively as a writer and artist. In one day alone, I can go down a rabbit hole of research and writing for one of our shows and also solve the puzzle of seating for an Opening Night. No two weeks are the same. But this wide range of responsibilities is also the biggest challenge, as it can be hard to switch gears between such dissimilar tasks multiple times a day.

TS: Why do you choose to work at Roundabout?

NM: I love working every day at a place with so large a capacity for play/musical development and production. The sheer volume of readings and workshops we mount every year—around 30—alongside our nine-show season, is staggering. While the multitude of different plays-in-process can make this job a very busy one, the feeling of stepping into so many completely different worlds in quick succession and seeing the work of so many artists every season never gets old. Working on so many separate projects, in big or small ways, continues to make me better and better at the things I love, and I never cease to be excited by the challenges that a new show will bring. •

Learn more at roundabouttheatre.org. Find us on:





WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE

TICKET POLICY

As a student participant in an Education at Roundabout program, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

PROGRAMS

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "Who's Who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.

ROUNABOUT THEATRE COMPANY • 2018-2019 SEASON



Roundabout Theatre Company (Todd Haimes, Artistic Director/CEO), a not-for-profit company founded in 1965, celebrates the power of theatre by spotlighting classics from the past, cultivating new works of the present, and educating minds for the future. More information on Roundabout's mission, history and programs can be found by visiting roundabouttheatre.org.

Roundabout's work with new and emerging playwrights and directors, as well as development of new work, is made possible by Kathryn Patterson and Tom Kemper.

We gratefully acknowledge the Roundabout Leaders for New Works: Alec Baldwin, James Costa and John Archibald, Linda L. D'Onofrio, Peggy and Mark Ellis, Howard Gilman Foundation, Jodi Glucksman, Sylvia Golden, Judith and Douglas Krupp, K. Myers, Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater, Ira Pittelman, Laura S. Rodgers, Mary Solomon, Lauren and Danny Stein, Harold and Mimi Steinberg Charitable Trust, and The Tow Foundation.

Roundabout Theatre Company is thankful to the following donors for their generous support of \$5,000 or more to Roundabout's education programs during the 2018-2019 school year.

- Anonymous
- Altman Foundation
- The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- The Rose. M. Badgley Residuary Charitable Trust
- The Theodore H. Barth Foundation
- Mr. and Mrs. Kevin Becker
- The Bok Family Foundation, Roxanne and Scott L. Bok Trustees
- The Honorable Joseph Borelli
- Philippa and James Burke
- Karen McKeel Calby
- Capital One
- R. Martin Chavez and Adam Norbury
- Dr. Jordan Cohen and Ms. Lee Wolf
- Steven and Alexandra Cohen Foundation
- Con Edison
- Mr. and Mrs. Steve Crawford
- The Honorable Chaim Deutsch
- Jeanne Feldhusen and Gerry Jager
- Kathleen Fisher and Rocco Maggioro
- The Ford Foundation
- Barry Friedberg and Charlotte Moss
- Brian and Lisa Garrison
- The Golden Family
- The Honorable Richard Gottfried
- Gray Foundation
- Mr. and Mrs. John Gustafsson
- Meryl Hartzband
- Maureen A. Hayes
- Philip J. Hempleman
- Muna and Basem Hishmeh
- Doug Hitchner and Larissa Martell
- Karen and Paul Isaac
- JobsFirstNYC
- The Honorable Corey Johnson, Speaker
- The JPB Foundation
- The Kaplen Foundation
- James and Josie Kelly
- Mrs. Allison Koffman and Mr. Jeffrey Lipsitz
- Elroy and Terry Krumholz Foundation, Inc.
- Phillip Laffey
- Barbara Lee and Alston Gardner
- Mr. and Mrs. Bryan Leibman
- Peter J. Lyon
- David and Anita Massengill
- May and Samuel Rudin Family Foundation
- Mayor's Office for Economic Opportunity
- Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment
- Mellam Family Foundation
- Pam and Bill Michaelcheck
- The Moelis Family
- The Stavros Niarchos Foundation
- New York Community Trust
- New York City Department of Cultural Affairs
- New York City Department of Small Business Services
- New York State Council on the Arts
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
- Marty and Kane Nussbaum
- Cynthia Nixon
- Charles R. O'Malley Charitable Lead Trust
- Gina Pate Pierce and Stephen Pierce
- The Pinkerton Foundation
- Mr. and Mrs. David Puth
- The Honorable Debi Rose
- The Rudin Foundation
- Ms. Samantha Rudin and Mr. David Earls
- The Adolph and Ruth Schurmacher Foundation
- Mr. Michael Slocum and Ms. Chaya Schwartz
- Denise R. Sobel
- The Solon E. Summerfield Foundation, Inc.
- Fern and Lenard Tessler
- Theater Subdistrict Council, LDC
- Jennifer Thomas
- Tikkun Olam Foundation, Inc.
- Mr. and Dr. James Tisch
- Michael Tuch Foundation
- Diane and Tom Tuft
- Vornado Realty Trust
- Cynthia C. Wainwright and Stephen Berger
- The Walt Disney Company
- Jason Weinberg
- The Honorable Helene Weinstein
- Ms. Christine Wentz
- Mr. and Mrs. Rich Whitney
- Ms. Joanne Witty and Mr. Eugene Keilin
- Emily J. Zuckerman, Esq. and Dr. Edward H. Bonfield

Education programs at Roundabout are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature

