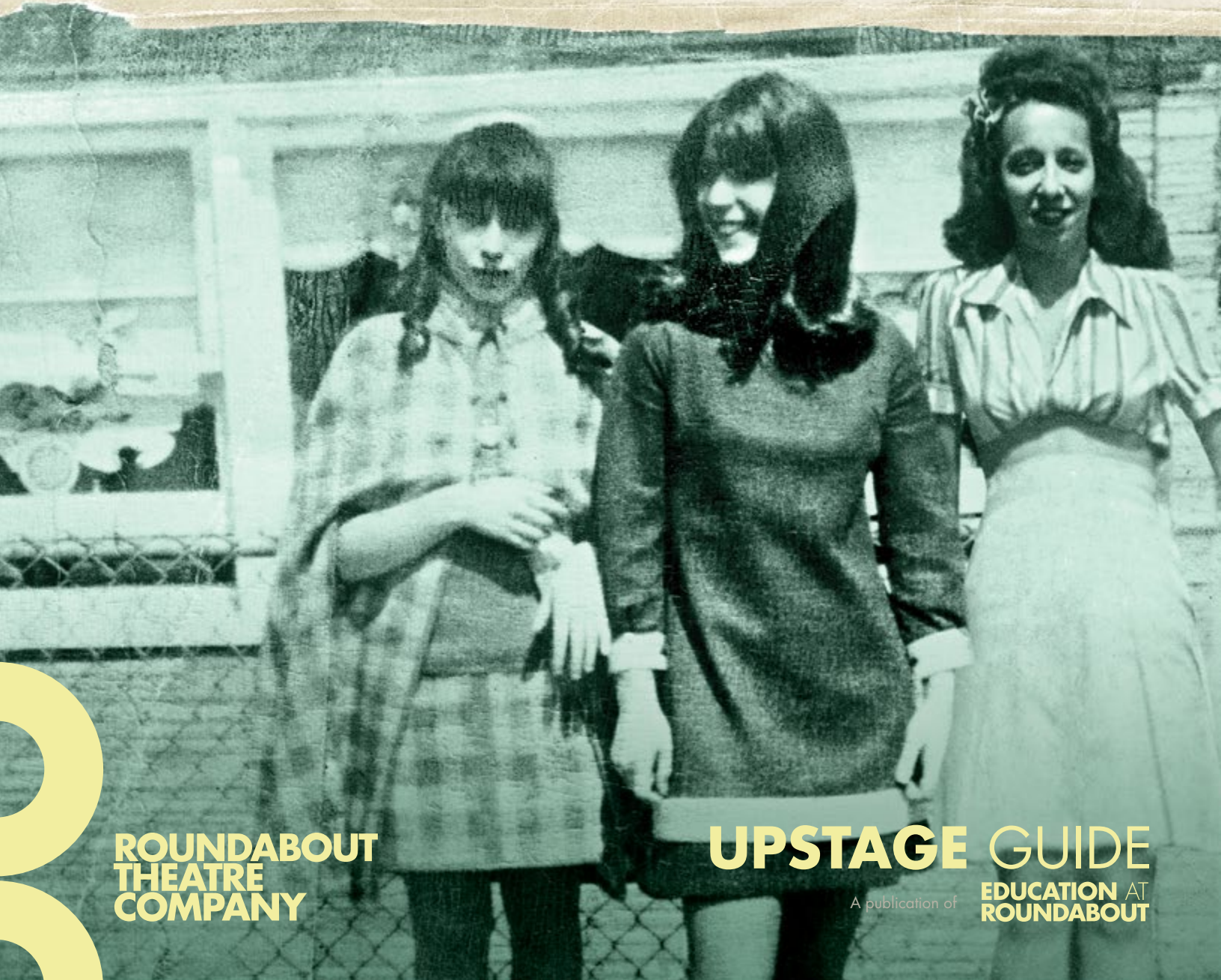


NAPOLI, BROOKLYN



**ROUNDAABOUT
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UPSTAGE GUIDE

A publication of **EDUCATION AT
ROUNDAABOUT**

UPSTAGE CALLBOARD

Napoli, Brooklyn

By Meghan Kennedy

Directed by Gordon Edelstein

In 1960 Brooklyn, the Muscolinos have raised three proud and passionate daughters. But as the girls come of age in a rapidly changing world, their paths diverge—in drastic and devastating ways—from their parents' deeply traditional values. Despite their fierce love, each young woman harbors a secret longing that, if revealed, could tear the family apart. When an earth-shattering event rocks their Park Slope neighborhood, life comes to a screeching halt and the Muscolino sisters are forced to confront their conflicting visions for the future in this gripping, provocative portrait of love in all its danger and beauty.

a note from Artistic Director Todd Haines

With *Napoli, Brooklyn*, Meghan has chosen to explore a story inspired by her own family history, set in 1960, well before this young talent was born. But that distance from the world her play explores has allowed her to view it through a theatrical lens that elevates the events beyond the tropes of family drama. It has also given her room for deep empathy, imbuing every character on her canvas with a full life and perspective of their own, often in ways that shake us out of our assumptions.

It's a story of immigrants finding their identities and coming to a new understanding of what "home" truly means. It's a story of unlikely alliances forming in the face of pain and loneliness. And it's a story of women taking risks that will come to define a generation.

when 1960

where Brooklyn, New York

who **Ludovica (Luda) Muscolino:** An Italian woman. She is the mother of three daughters.
Nic Muscolino: An Italian man. He is the father of three daughters, a tar worker, and the husband of Luda.
Tina Muscolino: An Italian American woman. She is the eldest of the Muscolino daughters and works in a tile factory.
Vita Muscolino: An Italian American girl. She is the middle child of the Muscolino daughters and lives in a convent.
Francesca Muscolino: An Italian American girl. She is the youngest of the Muscolino daughters and is a schoolgirl.
Connie Duffy: An Irish American girl. She is the daughter of Albert Duffy.
Albert Duffy: An Irish American man. He owns a butcher shop and is Connie's father.
Celia Jones: An African American woman. She works at the tile factory with Tina.

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INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT MEGHAN KENNEDY



Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Playwright Meghan Kennedy about her play *Napoli, Brooklyn*.

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

Meghan Kennedy: *Napoli, Brooklyn* is loosely based on my mother's adolescence. She grew up in a big, Italian Catholic, immigrant family. I grew up hearing stories about the plane crash that happened in her neighborhood in Brooklyn, and it stayed with me. The play came out of that and my own interest in how struggle in immigrant families is passed down from generation to generation, particularly among women. They had to fight very hard to find their voices and even harder to keep them intact. I want to honor those voices, conjure them as best I can and give them space. My mother is one of those voices. She's the strongest woman I know. And I wanted to give her a love story.

TS: What kind of research did you have to do in order to write it? What is the most challenging part of writing a period piece?

MK: I had a lot of conversations with my mother. Talked about the neighborhood, the community, family, food, church—everything. I got obsessed with certain details...recipes, songs, how they decorated the tree at Christmas time. Then I built outwards. I pored over old newspapers, read all the different accounts of the plane crash I could find. Looked into the conditions for women working in factories at the time. It's easy to get lost in the research. But I lived in that area of Park Slope while I was writing the play, and I got in the habit of taking walks past the site to get out of my head. Because it is about that time period, yes, and how the world was then. But at its core it's about these women, these characters, so at a certain point you put the research aside and let them be who they're going to be.

TS: Can you give us a sense of your process as a writer? How do you go about working on a play once you have an idea? Was there a formal development process for this play?

MK: This play lived inside my head for years before any of it actually made it onto paper. Which is how it tends to happen for me. It either survives the layers and layers of doubt and self-criticism or it doesn't. If it does, it usually means that by the time a first draft comes out, it comes out quickly. It's only at that point that I allow myself to start to do research and dig.

Then I usually end up spending a lot of time sort of talking to myself on walks, working through the play. I used to circle around Prospect Park, now it's down around the promenade and the Brooklyn Bridge.

This play was commissioned by Roundabout and went through a number of developmental readings...several at the Roundabout and also at places like Page 73 and New York Stage and Film and Williamstown. Each theatre was very generous with its resources, and hearing it out loud each time taught me something new. But it wasn't until we put it on its feet at Long Wharf that I was really able to do the most work. It's a very physical play. To finally be able to see the way it moves was huge. Working with Eugene Lee's set and Ben Stanton's



Meghan Kennedy

lighting and Jane Greenwood's costumes—they're all incredible—allowed it to settle in front of me for the first time and help me clarify things I had been struggling with.

TS: Do you sense there will be any major revisions during the rehearsal process? What precipitates revisions when you decide to rewrite?

MK: There will be revisions. We were fortunate enough to do the play at Long Wharf Theatre first and worked out a lot of things. But the Laura Pels is a new space, and new people will be saying the words...things change. Inevitably. Which is part of what I love about doing theatre—it's always moving. Production to production, night to night. If I had to guess, I'd say I will be tinkering right up until opening.

TS: Can you describe what you look for when collaborating with a director on a new play?

MK: Connection. I look for someone whose brain I respect. Someone who is thoughtful and respectful to the actors and everyone in the room. I look for someone who is willing to listen. You spend so much time with this person, you have to be able to speak the same language.

TS: What traits or qualities did you need in casting actors for this particular play?

MK: This play calls for a lot of physicality, so we were looking for strong, grounded actors. Six of the eight parts are women, so filling a stage with a bunch of very different and strong women was a fantastic job to have.



TS: The themes and ideas in the play are sure to stimulate a lot of discussion—what would you like audience members to keep in mind when they are discussing the events of your play?

MK: *Napoli, Brooklyn* revolves around an immigrant family trying to survive. The issues each member of that family faced still exist now. The American dream remains elusive for so many new members of this city, of this country. I hope when audiences discuss this play, aspects of its themes will resonate with their experiences—whether decades ago, or in confronting them now, week by week. I'm interested in how new generations fit into this always shifting American sense of belonging, and I'm interested in what happens when less-heard voices take up uncomfortable space and do just that, belong.

And in light of the new presidential administration, I'm happy this play is going into production right now. This is a story about women and immigrants, two groups that need as many spotlights on them as possible right now. I've said this before, and I will keep saying it—at

a moment when our rights are at stake and our voices are being threatened, I think it's the perfect time to make some noise.

TS: How do you keep yourself inspired as an artist? What else are you working on now?

MK: Certain routines have become rituals for me. Every morning, I read for about half an hour first thing. Then I'll get up and make coffee and put it in a thermos and go for a walk. If I can do those few simple things, I tend to stay working. Sometimes I'll fall off track. Or I'll get busy and not prioritize that time for myself. But then there are things that jump-start me—going to see a good film, having a long supper with a friend, even grocery shopping...anything that gets me out of my head. •



Alyssa Bresnahan in Long Wharf Theatre's production of *Napoli, Brooklyn*

WORLD OF THE PLAY: THE YEAR 1960

The 1950s were known to many as an historic “boom” in American peace, prosperity, and pride; the 1960s, on the other hand, are infamous for their wartime upheaval, social tumult, and national disillusionment. *Napoli, Brooklyn* takes place in 1960, right in between two decades that represent very different moments in American history. Below is a snapshot of America in 1960 and an overview of the events that defined the year.

THE COLD WAR

The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union had been escalating throughout the 1950s. Immediately after World War II, the United States had adopted a policy of “containment” of Soviet expansion, aimed at halting the spread of communism to countries throughout the world. The ensuing battle to contain communism led to the Korean War in 1950 and sparked a massive buildup of nuclear arms throughout the decade. May 1960 saw tensions between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. rise when the Soviet Union shot down an American U-2 spy plane in what became known as the **U-2 Incident**. Unable to deny American efforts to spy on Soviet territory, President Dwight D. Eisenhower admitted to years of American espionage. The pilot, Francis Powers, was captured and sentenced to ten years in prison.

1960 also witnessed a development in the Space Race that convinced American scientists that the Soviet Union was several steps closer to putting a person in orbit than was the United States. On August 19, the U.S.S.R. successfully launched into orbit *Korabl-Sputnik 2*, which contained dogs, rats, and mice. The satellite was successfully retrieved the following day with all animals alive. For the Russians, the launch of *Korabl-Sputnik 2* was a vital step toward launching a human into space—which would in fact happen only eight months later.

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

By 1960, the Civil Rights Movement was around six years old. *Brown v. Board of Education* had overturned the

“separate but equal” doctrine for public schools in 1954; Rosa Parks had famously sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott by refusing to give up her bus seat to a white man in 1955; and Martin Luther King, Jr., had become the President of the newly-formed Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957. In 1960, national attention on the Civil Rights Movement grew in large part due to the rise of sit-ins at restaurants and other establishments across

the country. The famous **Greensboro sit-in**, in which four black college students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College refused to leave a “whites-only” lunch counter at a local Woolworth’s, took place on February 1 of that year and sparked a wave of over 50 similar sit-ins in other Southern states in following months. While far from the first sit-in of the Civil Rights Movement, the Greensboro sit-in succeeded in drawing national media attention

to the Movement and moving many restaurants across the South to integrate by that summer.

On May 6, the **Civil Rights Act of 1960** was signed into law. The Act attempted to combat the unconstitutional disenfranchisement of black citizens, which often took the form of literacy tests, poll taxes, and sometimes overt intimidation. The Act allowed federal courts to appoint “voting referees” who, if courts found that there had been discriminatory restrictions on voter registration in a certain district, could institute voter registration for all eligible black voters in the district.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Democratic U.S. Senator **John F. Kennedy** announced his candidacy for President on January 2, 1960, and went on to garner the Democratic nomination, despite controversy surrounding his relatively young age and his Catholic faith. His ensuing campaign changed the face of political campaigns forever. Branding his potential presidency the “new frontier,” Kennedy promised a new era of reform in the tradition of the New Deal. Kennedy amplified his



School girls at the integrated Barnard Elementary School in Washington, D.C.



message by capitalizing on television technology and popular culture to reach the masses in a way no presidential candidate ever had. During his televised debate with Republican nominee Richard M. Nixon, Kennedy, having planned his appearance, position, and point of focus before the cameras, outshined his opponent in looks, poise, and “presidentiality.” Kennedy’s adeptness at harnessing the power of television helped win him the election on November 8 and paved the way for the kinds of campaigns we know today.

BIRTH CONTROL

On May 9, 1960, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) officially approved the contraceptive pill Enovid as a means of birth control. Colloquially known as “the pill,” Enovid had actually been on the market since 1957, but only for use in treating severe menstrual disorders. The development of the pill had been many years in the making. Birth control activist and Planned Parenthood founder Margaret Sanger, who had opened the first birth control clinic in the United States in 1916, met endocrinologist Gregory Pincus in 1951 and convinced him to develop a new, improved form of birth control. Beginning in 1952, Pincus and gynecologist John Rock began research on what would become the pill with a grant provided by wealthy biologist and activist Katherine McCormick. •



1960 U.S. CENSUS

TOTAL U.S. POPULATION

179,323,175 (18.5% increase from 1950)

NEW YORK CITY POPULATION

7,781,984 (1.4% decrease from 1950)

LIFE EXPECTANCY

69.77 years

MEDIAN AGE

29.5 years

MARITAL PERCENTAGE

Among men ages 14+: 69.3% Among women ages 14+: 65.9%

NUMBER OF FAMILIES

About 45,062,000

AVERAGE FAMILY SIZE

3.1 people

MEDIAN AGE OF FIRST MARRIAGE

Male: 22.8 years Female: 20.3 years

FEMALE WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION: 37.7%

MALE WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION: 83.3%

UNEMPLOYMENT: 5.5%

MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME

\$5,620

MEDIAN HOME VALUE

\$58,600

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR GORDON EDELSTEIN

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Director Gordon Edelstein about his work on *Napoli, Brooklyn*.

Ted Sod: Why did you choose to direct Meghan Kennedy's new play *Napoli, Brooklyn*?

Gordon Edelstein: Todd Haimes sent me the play and asked if I was interested in directing it. I read it and fell in love with it. I met the writer, and we were very like-minded, so I agreed to do it. Too often new plays are hatched before they are quite ready, and once the play opens in New York, its fate is somewhat sealed. Most plays do better with longer incubation periods. We decided to do it at The Long Wharf Theatre, where I am Artistic Director, first before opening in New York—we have an audience that's not unlike the Roundabout audience in its sophistication—and it seemed like a logical step.

TS: What's your process when you work with a writer on a new play?

GE: I'm pretty much about trying to realize the author's vision. That doesn't mean that I'm a slave to what he or she imagines, but I try as deeply as I can to understand what the playwright's intentions are. Sometimes what the playwright imagines physically or hears how a line should be executed is 100% spot on; sometimes a writer has a really specific idea about how something should be done and those ideas should be understood as completely as possible. Sometimes, however, there are different ways to execute what the author's impulse is. I try as hard as I can to understand what is in the author's heart, mind, and soul, and then I try to realize that onstage.

TS: What do you think the play is about?

GE: The play is about the Muscolino family, and it focuses on a mother and her three daughters who are searching for an authentic life as immigrants. And this is happening at a moment in American history when the winds of change are just about to blow. The play is also about dealing with the extremes of being an immigrant in this country.

TS: The play takes place in 1960, correct?

GE: Yes, so some of the forces that will coalesce into what we know of as the '60s are already gathering, but they're gathering in ways no one can quite perceive yet. Like every person living in America at that time, the Muscolino family will be affected by those changes.

TS: Do you have roots in Brooklyn?

GE: Yes, as a young child I would spend weekends in Brooklyn visiting my grandparents. My grandparents lived in Brooklyn, my parents moved to Long Island, I grew up on Long Island, I moved back to Manhattan, and my kids live in Brooklyn.

TS: Does that aspect of your childhood make the play resonate with you?

GE: Not really. The Brooklyn of my childhood is not the Brooklyn of this play. To be honest, the Brooklyn of my childhood was getting into a station wagon, driving to see my grandparents, visiting them in their apartment and maybe going to Lundy's for dinner and driving back home. I wasn't on the streets of Brooklyn, I didn't grow up in Brooklyn



Gordon Edelstein

like the Muscolinos. I think what really resonates for me, where I intersect with the play most profoundly, is the family relationships and the complicated emotions shared among siblings.

TS: What is your understanding of Luda and Nic's relationship?

GE: They are deeply entwined. I am uncertain whether the words "in love" are the correct words. I'm not saying they're not in love, but it's a complicated term to use in this instance because there is so much emotional and physical abuse in the family. Meghan might say they're in love. I think Nic is an extremely frustrated man who feels like a failure in the new country. He came to America—like so many others—with great hopes, and his hopes have not been met. He feels small, and he takes out that feeling of smallness on his wife and daughters. I will say, however, that the relationship between Nic and Luda is intimate. Very intimate. They're deeply connected, and their relationship has a traditional Italian form to it, but I hesitate to say they're in love.

TS: Meghan is dealing with the patriarchy in her play, correct?

GE: That's a very interesting question. You're dealing in the tug-of-war between patriarchy and matriarchy. On the one hand, this Italian family is patriarchal, and on the other hand, it's extremely matriarchal. The daughters in many ways identify with their mother more than their father. It's more complicated than just a patriarchal family.

TS: How do you understand the daughters' relationship to one another and to their parents?

GE: These are three daughters who love each other to the bone. They are fiercely loyal to and protective of each other. Given the violence in their house, they need to be. Their response is to band together. Each of them has a different personality—particularly the younger two—the eldest belongs to a different generation in many ways. The younger two are very much children of the '60s. As I said earlier, it's the dawning of the Age of Aquarius. One of the things that I adore about this play is that it has a proto-feminist subtext, and that is extremely moving to me.

TS: How did you research the world of the play in order to direct it?

GE: The specifics of Brooklyn circa 1960 are important for the clothes and the props, but having lived through that time, I didn't do a lot of research. I spent a tremendous amount of time on this play with Meghan over this last year. I spent time digging into the play and less time doing dramaturgical research. The Muscolinos feel very familiar to me, even though they are Italian. My family was certainly more financially successful and they were Jews, but I think I have an instinctive feeling for this family and the events in the play.

TS: What were you looking for when you were casting? What traits did you need from the actors?

GE: These characters are very specific for Meghan. Many of them are loosely based on her mother's family. They are certainly inspired by Meghan's biography, and so I tried to understand exactly what Meghan had in mind. Also, because there are two teenagers in the play, I really wanted to cast actors who look like teenagers. We often cast actors in their mid- or late-20s as teenagers because we have to. When there's a real feeling of the characters being young, it changes the audience's perception of the storytelling. It makes the play more dangerous. It's a very challenging play for the actors. It demands tremendous emotional range. I think of this play as a *passionata*, and it demands full and open-hearted emotion from everybody.

TS: The play has many different locations. Can you talk about the play's manifestation visually?

GE: We're fortunate to have Eugene Lee designing the settings, and he's somebody I've worked with before. Yes, this play has a lot of different locations, and the challenge is how to remain simple. Simplicity is not the opposite of complexity. We are trying to find a way to tell the story so the scenery doesn't get in the way and the changing of locations doesn't interfere with the flow of the action. It is important to me that we create a space where the entire play can happen with as little change as possible.

TS: What about music?

GE: I always use a lot of music in shows I direct. Fitz Patton, the sound designer, and I are still doing research. The play calls for some Mario Lanza music, and I've added some liturgical music. I've added the Shirelles to give us a sense of time. I think musically, and I'm still exploring ways to use different kinds of music throughout the show.

TS: How do you keep yourself inspired?

GE: That's easy because I get to work on plays like *Napoli, Brooklyn*. As long as I get to work on interesting projects, I remain very turned

on. The hard part is finding time to sleep and to take care of myself. The easy part is staying inspired by interesting material by exceptional writers like Meghan. Meghan Kennedy is a writer with genuine gifts of theatrical imagination. Her use of language is poetic. It's not pretentious in any way, but it is distilled. It's been very gratifying to work on it, very emotional. This play is fullblooded in a way that I find enormously satisfying and sustaining.

TS: Do you have any advice for a young director?

GE: I would just say follow your passion. Follow your heart. Yes, you need to keep one eye on your professional advancement, but the best way to grow and learn as a stage director is by doing it. That's what I did. I certainly think I'm a better director now than I was a decade ago.

TS: Is there a question that I didn't ask but you wish I had?

GE: I want to pay homage and respect to Todd Haimes, who despite the financial pressures of running such a monumental operation, continues to support the work of young artists. The most exciting things that Roundabout has been doing in the past ten years have been the work of these younger artists. Personally, I admire Todd because he continues to take risks. •



Alyssa Bresnahan and Jordyn DiNatale in Long Wharf Theatre's production of *Napoli, Brooklyn*

IMMIGRATION TO NEW YORK AND BROOKLYN

The turn of the Twentieth Century saw mass immigration to America from many different countries. However, we will be focusing on the two groups who are represented in *Napoli, Brooklyn* and are arguably two of the most famous immigrant groups to New York: the Italians and the Irish.

In the 1880s, there were 300,000 Italian Immigrants to the United States; in the 1890s, 600,000; in the decade after that, more than two million. By 1920, when immigration began to taper off, more than 4 million Italians had come to the United States, representing more than 10 percent of the nation's foreign-born population. One predominantly Italian area of New York was "Italian Harlem," which at its peak in the 1930s had over 100,000 Italian-Americans living in very squalid, poorly-kept apartment buildings. Little Italy is probably the most famous Italian enclave, despite the fact that Italian Harlem's total population was three times the size of Little Italy's at their respective peaks. Both of these areas are found in Manhattan, but there were also ethnic enclaves of Italians in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Queens, and Staten Island. Today, New York City has the largest population of Italian Americans in the United States of America, as well as in North America. Globally, New York City is home to the third largest Italian population outside of Italy, behind Sao Paulo, Brazil and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

In contrast to Italian immigration, the majority of Irish immigration actually happened earlier, in the mid-1800s. As a result of Ireland's Great Famine, many Irish families had no option but to leave home. Between 1.5 and 2 million Irish had left Ireland by 1854, many of whom moved to cities in the United States. For example, by 1850 the Irish made up a quarter of the population of Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Buffalo, and Baltimore. In the decade before *Napoli, Brooklyn* takes place, the 1950s, some 50,000 immigrants left Ireland for America, around one quarter settling in New York in Irish enclaves that already existed. Irish entering New York in 1950 would find jobs, an Irish mayor (William O'Dwyer), and an Irish-American Cardinal (Francis Spellman) in the city. In 2017, the city of New York has the most Irish-Americans of any American city.

As is common with immigrant groups, Irish immigrants in 1960s Brooklyn tended to form tight communities in specific areas, such as Park Slope, where *Napoli, Brooklyn* is set. Historian Linda Dowling Almeida writes that "across the East River in Brooklyn the largest clusters of Irish immigrants and second-generation families identified by the 1960

census were found along three sides of Prospect Park in Park Slope. They were found along Prospect Park West back to Sixth Avenue, north to Atlantic Avenue on one side and south to Prospect Expressway on the other side. A total of 10,888 Irish lived in these communities... to summarize the socioeconomic profile of the Irish, the data showed the first and second generations to be middle- to lower-middle-class people who liked to live in predominantly white, multi-ethnic neighborhoods where significant numbers of school-age children attended private schools."

These immigrants came to New York in pursuit of the American dream and in search of a better life. In the Great Famine of Ireland, one million people perished. In Italy, at the turn of the twentieth century, millions of Italians came to America to escape the growing rural poverty in Southern Italy and Sicily. These immigrants, combined with others coming from outside and inside the United States, shaped New York into what it is today. In the 1960s, different immigrant groups tended to be grouped more into enclaves, but Brooklyn especially was a bustling melting pot of different countries and cultures. •



Three women celebrating a festival in Italy, 1960



PARK SLOPE: THEN AND NOW

Park Slope, a residential neighborhood in northwest Brooklyn, takes its name from its geography: it slopes down from the western edge of Prospect Park, losing 170 feet of elevation before it ends in the Gowanus Canal. The neighborhood's north-south boundaries have shifted over the years; today, Park Slope is bordered by Flatbush Avenue on the north, and Greenwood Cemetery (roughly 23rd Street) on the south.

Park Slope was developed in the latter half of the 19th century, when steam ferries and, later, the Brooklyn Bridge, made it possible for residents to commute to Manhattan for work. Wealthy families built grand homes near Prospect Park West, and more modest brownstone row-houses filled the rest of the neighborhood. In 1900, Park Slope had the highest per-capita income in the United States.

European immigration and the Great Depression lowered the neighborhood's socioeconomic status. Old Dutch and English families were replaced by newer immigrants from Italy, then Ireland, and a few Puerto Ricans and African-American migrants from the south. But the real shift in Park Slope's fortunes happened as a result of a practice known as "red-lining" and played out over several decades. In the 1930s, the Federal Housing Association worked with financial institutions to develop color-coded maps that theoretically indicated whether or not a neighborhood was a good investment. Much of Park Slope (as well as over half of Brooklyn) was deemed to be a poor investment because the housing stock was old, and residents included immigrants and African-Americans. As a result, prospective homeowners couldn't get mortgages in those areas, and current homeowners couldn't borrow money to repair or improve their properties. The neighborhood was then ripe for "block-busting," when shady real estate companies would play on the racism or economic fears of white homeowners by convincing them that the area was becoming a black ghetto and that they should sell their property quickly and cheaply while they still could. These properties were then often converted to small apartments or single-room occupancy buildings.

In 1960, Park Slope was a neighborhood "in transition," according to *The New York Times*. Residents were primarily Italian or Irish: 93.4% of the population was white. The median household income was lower than average for Brooklyn, the equivalent of about \$48,500 today, and less than a fifth of residents owned their homes.

Pete Hamill, longtime New York City columnist, lived in Park Slope from his birth in 1935 through the late 1950s. In a 1969 essay titled *Brooklyn: The Sane Alternative*, he tells of a youth filled with "boxball, devilball, buck-buck-how-many-horns-are-up? (called Johnny Onna Pony by the intellectuals), ringalevio, and always, always, stickball," and how his generation has fled to and floundered in sterile suburbs. He describes how the Dodgers brought Brooklynites together across class and color lines, and the plunge in community morale when they left the borough in 1957. He writes of wartime gangs with names like the Tigers and the Red Hook Boys, whose members later fought in Korea or succumbed to heroin addiction. He notes the jobs lost in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. He traces the factors that led to the late 1950s and early 1960s as a low point in Park Slope's history.

And, presciently, he foretells the gentrification of Park Slope: "A little at a time, people started to drift back. It was not, and is not, a flood. But it has begun...the boarding houses were bought for as little as \$14,000, cleaned out, re-built and re-wired. That was only four and five years ago. Today, the prices are slowly being driven up, and the great fear is that the real-estate people will take over this place too."

By 1982, the gentrification of Park Slope was in full swing. *The New York Times* reported that Park Slope's relative stability was drawing Manhattanites eager "to escape rents that have soared beyond their means," and that the newcomers were displacing poorer families. Brownstones were selling for \$200,000 or \$300,000.

Today, Park Slope is again a wealthy, family-oriented neighborhood, with a median income almost twice that of the borough as a whole. The racial makeup is 70% white, 14% Hispanic, 7% Asian, 5% African-American, and 4% mixed-race. The median home price is \$930,000. Park Slope is often rated New York's most livable neighborhood: the public schools are strong, there's abundant green space, and it has plenty of shopping and dining options. •



Park Slope, Brooklyn brownstones

INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR JORDYN DINATALE

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke to actor Jordyn DiNatale about her role as Francesca in *Napoli, Brooklyn*.

Ted Sod: Where and when were you born? What made you decide to become an actress? Where are you getting your training? Do you have any teachers who you feel have had a profound influence on you?

Jordyn DiNatale: I was born and raised in New Haven, CT. That is why I was so thrilled to do the first run of *Napoli, Brooklyn* at Long Wharf Theatre, a theatre I grew up seeing shows at. I made the decision to be an actor professionally when I was about twelve years old, but I fell into it earlier than that. When I was seven, my older brother was auditioning for *Carousel* at Act 2 Theatre, which is also in New Haven. I asked my parents if I could audition too, and they were shocked because I was a very shy kid. I sang the only song I knew, "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," and the next thing I knew I was in the chorus. I performed in a few more plays at Act 2 over the next three years. Acting in that old, haunted theatre is one of my favorite memories. I've collected many ghost stories from there! When I was twelve, I told my parents that I wanted acting to be my career. From that moment on, they never stopped helping me make that a reality. I received some of my training from Educational Center for The Arts (ECA) in New Haven. Most of my training is from different acting teachers in NYC. The teacher who has had the most influence on me is Anthony Abeson. He always helps actors find the humanity in their characters and reminds us how important the actor's role is. He reminds us how the writer is saying something to the world with their words and is entrusting us, the actors, to deliver that message. Anthony is just an amazing person and fantastic coach, and his classes have really helped me feel comfortable tackling challenging work. My peers in his classes are the most loving and supportive people, and it makes the whole learning environment so special.

TS: Why did you choose to play the role of Francesca in Meghan Kennedy's *Napoli, Brooklyn*? What do you think the play is about?

JD: I really fell in love with Meghan's script. Seeing a story that features strong female characters is definitely inspiring. And I like that it centers around a close Italian-American family because growing up in an Italian family myself, I can relate to a lot of the family dynamics. The emphasis on cooking and the way that food impacts the Muscolino family's daily life is a quality that is also close to my heart. This play is about so many things for so many people. That is what I think is so special about it—it has the ability to touch everyone in all different ways. The struggles of being an immigrant, the clash of old world and new world values, finding who you want to be while everyone around you is telling you who you have to be, having dreams but not knowing what to do with them. After reading the play through for the first time, it reminded me of the poem "Harlem" by Langston Hughes, in which he asks, "What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore—And then run? Does it stink like rotten meat? Or crust and sugar over—like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. Or does it explode?" I feel like all of the characters in this play are at their breaking point, and they all explode in their own ways.

TS: How is this character relevant to you? Will you share some of your thoughts about who your character is with us? What do you find most



Jordyn DiNatale

challenging/exciting about this role?

JD: Francesca is bold and fearless. She questions everything she's been taught. She knows what she wants and she tries her best to make it happen. I can relate to Francesca in this way. It sounds silly, but when I was younger I loved learning new words. Whenever I learned a new word, I would try to use it in as many sentences as I could (annoyingly so!). I remember when I learned the word persevere. I loved it! Whenever I finished something difficult I would proudly tell my parents that I persevered through it. Perseverance became a part of my identity, as it is very much a part of Francesca's. Playing Francesca is exciting and challenging because I am portraying a character based on a real person, Meghan's mom. There is a huge responsibility in that. Also, I am often cast as a meek character who is trying to find herself. It is exciting to play a character who knows so definitively and unapologetically who she is and instead of trying to find herself, she is trying to find where she belongs.

TS: At this point in your process, how do you understand Francesca's relationship to her sisters?

JD: Francesca has a tug-of-war relationship with her whole family. She loves her sisters, but she doesn't think they see her for who she really is. And that is really all she wants. I think she is closest to her sister Vita and confides in her the most. Vita likes philosophy and questions things too, so I think Fran has learned a lot from her and thinks Vita is the smartest person she knows (besides herself!). Fran and her eldest sister, Tina, have less in common, but I think Fran really admires Tina's physical strength. Fran knows that Tina will always be there for her and ready to protect her, which makes Tina a really comforting presence in Fran's life. •



ITALIAN CULTURE

Most of the Italian immigration to the United States came from the poorer rural regions of Italy, not from the sprawling cities. As a result, the culture that was brought over was of a very specific form. Rather than the high Italian culture of figures such as Dante and Michelangelo, the culture that these Italians brought over was much more localized; it was specific to the village or town from which they came. As a result, there tended to be an emphasis on Old World values, such as the importance of family, of ritual, and of course, of religion.

Italy is a country with strong ties to Catholicism, so many Italians brought a strong sense of religious duty with them to America. Something that is tethered to the Italian relationship to Catholicism is the ritualism; one way that this manifests is in Feast Days. Italian-Americans celebrate Feast Days to honor the birthdays of specific Catholic saints. For example, one of the largest feasts in the United States is the "Feast of All Feasts," Saint Anthony's Feast, which is celebrated in Boston. Started in 1919, it is considered the most "authentic," and most likely largest, Italian religious festival in the United States. It takes place over three days during the month of August, and over 300,000 people attend, with more than 100 vendors lining the streets with traditional Italian cuisine and wares.

The traditions, values and culture that these Italian immigrants brought with them to the United States tended to be local to their specific town or village or region, so all over the United States you see Feast Days specific to that particular area and Italian-American community. For example, in Cleveland's Little Italy they hold the Feast of Assumption on August 15th, where people pin money on a Blessed Virgin Mary statue as a symbol of prosperity. But one particular feast, which is celebrated all over the United States at Christmas time (and also makes an appearance in *Napoli, Brooklyn*), is known as the Feast of the Seven Fishes.

Unlike the aforementioned Feast Days, the Feast of the Seven Fishes, is not a "feast" in the stricter sense of "holiday," but a grand meal. Strictly speaking, Christmas Eve is a vigil or fasting day, and the change in diet and consumption of seafood reflects the tradition of abstinence from red meat until the actual feast of Christmas Day itself. Interestingly, the feast does exist in Italy but has a different name; it is called simply *La Vigilia*, or *The Vigil*. This celebration commemorates the wait, the *Vigilia di Natale*, for the midnight birth of the baby Jesus.



Feast of the Seven Fishes

It is unclear when the term "Feast of the Seven Fishes" was popularized. The meal may actually include seven, eight, or even nine specific fishes that are considered traditional. However, some Italian-American families have been known to celebrate with nine, eleven, or thirteen different seafood dishes.

It is important for immigrants to bring a strong sense of home with them when they move to new countries, which is why some of the most recognizable Italian-American culture is in its restaurants,

food and drink, music, films, and architecture. These symbols of Italy get consumed into the American identity, and the two get molded together. Mario Lanza, whose music is heard in the play, is a great example of this. He was born in Philadelphia but was exposed to classic singing as a small child by his Abruzzese-Molisan parents who had moved from Italy. As a teenager, he had a very quick rise to fame, eventually becoming a worldwide star, signing a seven-year film contract with Metro-Goldwyn Mayer after appearing and singing at the Hollywood Bowl in 1947. Stars like Mario Lanza, who had a huge but short career, are massively popular, as they represent for these immigrants, the merging of the Old World (Italy) and the new (America). Lanza brought Neapolitan material in his songs to a wider audience, which was well received by Italian-Americans and the American population at large and inspired a generation of pop music artists and opera singers alike. •

WOMEN: BEFORE THE '60S BROKE

1960 Brooklyn, just before the Sexual Revolution, the War in Vietnam, and the Civil Rights Movement, there was a great deal of conformity left over from the idyllic 1950s. Women were still restricted by educational, religious, and cultural expectations. Gender identity, workforce regulations, and even violence against women remained taboo topics in the late 1950s and early 1960s, especially for immigrant families. And while the Muscolinos are a family with fierce love for one another, it's clear they are living in between the stark past and an uninhibited future. The three daughters' New World ideas are challenged by Old World traditions as they each discover what womanhood means in *Napoli, Brooklyn*.

SEXUALITY AND GENDER IDENTITY

In 1960 there were strict gender roles that were reinforced after World War II. In a form of resistance, butch and femme became the emerging identities amongst the lesbian community before labels such as queer and/or gay. Butch women often became described as aggressive and masculine, whereas femme women were described as passive and feminine. Butch appearances began to derive out of women adopting an industrial, working class lifestyle, often wearing loose, baggy clothes, sometimes resembling men's clothing. In *Napoli, Brooklyn*, Francesca often wears loose pants and cardigans, clothing considered menswear. Femmes often dressed in skirts, dresses, and blouses as straight women did, just as Connie does. Class is a major factor that would have allowed Francesca and Connie to remain inconspicuous. Working, middle-class people were expected to wear industrial clothing, whereas lesbian women in professional jobs were expected to adhere to the mainstream gender roles. While lesbians were leading the Sexual Liberation movement through the United States in the late 1950s, two young girls like Francesca and Connie weren't likely to meet any unless they went to a secret bar or club. For young, immigrant, Catholic girls in 1960 Brooklyn like Francesca Muscolino and Connie Duffy, their love affair was not only forbidden legislatively, but also culturally. If discovered, Francesca and Connie would face being exiled from their families, sent to nunneries like Francesca's sister, Vita, or sent to a conversion camp. In order for Francesca and Connie to sustain their romantic relationship, they plan to set out for Paris. Why Paris? After the French Revolution in 1791, the French government decriminalized sodomy, and substantial waves of queer communities began to form and migrate to Paris in the hopes of sexual freedom. Ironically, many other European countries such as Italy, where the Muscolinos migrated from, are still more accepting about



Two sisters in Italy standing outside their home, 1960

sexual fluidity and gender identity than the United States currently is. Women and many other LGBTQ persons still struggle with acceptance and equality worldwide.

WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

During World War II, job opportunities opened up for women to work in factories as men were drafted into the military. While there were growing opportunities for women to work, their wages didn't see the same increase. When many American men returned home from the war, women either were forced out or quit their factory jobs. Out of work and left with no source of income, women relied on their husband's income, and others began to seek out a college education. In spite of this great shift in how women participated in the industrial workforce post-war, many continued to rely on factory jobs. In 1960, a white woman generally made about an average of 61 cents compared to every dollar a white man earned. Today, the gender wage gap still remains in effect, as white women on average earn 79 cents to one man's dollar. The numbers drop even further for women of color: black women make 60 cents to a white man's dollar, and Latina women make 45 cents to a white man's dollar.

Tina, the eldest sister, is the only woman who works in the Muscolino household. Although her father works to lay tar on the roads, the family's security greatly depends on Tina's income from the tile factory, especially because she has a limited education and began working at a young age.



An Italian wife and her military husband, circa 1950

Though feminist organizations such as the Women's Trade Union League formed as early as 1903, pre-dating the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Fire (the deadliest industrial fire in 1911, affecting a factory where mostly immigrant women worked), labor unions were not dominant in New York until the 1970s. It is likely that Tina was not in a union, so she was not guaranteed benefits, safety protection, a decent living wage, nor protection from employment discrimination based on gender. Many non-union women workers were and still are manipulated into working for low pay and unsafe working conditions. Yet, when Tina meets Celia, another woman at the factory, she is reminded that the possibilities for her own future are endless.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

While in 1960 the sexual liberation movement was just ahead, domestic abuse was a background issue and often considered a private family concern as opposed to a criminal act. In 1973, the American Bar Association claimed that a domestic dispute "which occurs between

husband and wife" should be resolved "without reliance upon criminal assault or disorderly conduct statutes." Nic and Luda's passion for each other often crosses the line between passion and rage. In 1960 there was little to no protection for women experiencing domestic abuse. In fact, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was not signed into law until 1994. Nic abuses both his wife, Luda, and their three daughters physically and psychologically. In a 1956 national survey, Vincent De Francis, Director of the Children's Division of the American Humane Association, found that 32 states had no non-government child protective agencies. As daughters of an immigrant family, there was no protection to ensure that their father would be held responsible for his actions. Regardless, Nic was the patriarch and primary breadwinner for the family; out of fear of losing income, in addition to cultural norms, Nic is likely never to be reported. While less likely in Nic's time, today, many immigrant women in abusive domestic situations don't report the abuser for fear of deportation. Fear of deportation is a reality that many women in abusive, immigrant families face today. Today, these combined circumstances discourage many immigrant women from seeking help from abusive and manipulative partners, a trend that may continue with women from refugee countries today such as Syria and Sudan. •



Three Italian sisters celebrate a sister's wedding

FAMILY DRAMA: HOW ART IMITATES LIFE



The events and people *Napoli, Brooklyn* are loosely inspired by family history that playwright Meghan Kennedy learned from her mother. Like Francesca in the play, Kennedy's mother was the youngest daughter of Italian immigrants in Brooklyn. In drawing upon her ancestry for inspiration, Kennedy stands on the shoulders of three giants of the American theatre: Eugene O'Neill, Tennessee Williams, and Arthur Miller, all of whom mined their own backgrounds to create their most memorable plays.

The Tyrones of *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, seen last season at Roundabout, were based closely on O'Neill's parents, James and Ella, and older brother, James Jr.. The Wingfields of Williams's most autobiographical play, *The Glass Menagerie*, were inspired by Williams's mother Edwina and sister Laura, while his father Cornelius looms heavily as the absent father. Both O'Neill and Williams inserted dramatized versions of themselves into their plays, through the characters of Edmund and Tom, respectively (Tom was also Williams's real name).

Miller's iconic Willy Loman of *Death of Salesman* was inspired by the playwright's uncle Manny Newman, a salesman who suffered anxiety and despair and committed suicide. Miller's representative in the play is not one of the Loman sons, but nephew Bernard, a nerdy teenager who surpasses Willy's sons in his achievements. Miller's 1968 play *The Price* (revived this season by Roundabout) has even deeper roots in Miller's past. Like Miller's brother Kermit, Victor Franz drops out of college to support his parents, who are hurt by the Depression. Meanwhile, older brother Walter

resembles Arthur, who left the family to put himself through college and went on to achieve greater success, along with great respect from the parents he left behind.

Dramatizing one's past can allow a writer to work through difficult memories. The fallout of O'Neill's tortured family relationships, along with his mother's drug addiction, weighed heavily on his life. He described his own suffering in a letter to a psychoanalyst, 15 years before he wrote *Long Day's Journey*. He dedicated the play to his wife Carlotta, thanking her for "the faith in love that enabled me to face my dead at last and write this play."

Gore Vidal, a fellow writer and loyal friend, said that Williams "could not possess his own life until he had written about it." His mother and sister continued to haunt his work. One of his darkest plays, *Suddenly Last Summer*, emerged from the guilt Williams felt when his mother allowed Rose to be lobotomized—a futile attempt to cure her mental illness. But unlike Tom Wingfield, who abandons his family at the end of the play, Williams continued to take care of his mother and sister.

Miller denied that his work was autobiographical. Still, he often dealt with the lasting impact of the Great Depression on the individual American psyche, an effect he experienced personally. Miller was the son of a well-to-do family who lost their fortunes in the stock market crash and lived in reduced circumstances during the Depression. In *The Price*, he drew upon personal memories of his family's financial struggles. Although he asserted that Victor and Walter do not represent

his brother and himself, Miller acknowledged that "the magnetic underlying situation (of their relationship) was deep in my bones." Critic Martin Gottfried proposes that *The Price* could be read as "Miller's attempt to justify his life choices." In a review of Roundabout's 2017 production, Jesse Green proposes that aspects of Miller can be found both in Victor's disgust



John Gallagher, Jr., Michael Shannon, Gabriel Byrne and Jessica Lange in Roundabout's 2016 production of *Long Day's Journey Into Night*



of materialism and in Walter's "silk-stocking (or camel-hair) problems."

While tapping into a situation deep in his bones, Miller also combined characters and invented situations. Plays and autobiographies are different literary genres that fulfill different purposes, and both Miller and Williams wrote actual autobiographies (*Timebends* and *Memoirs*, respectively.) Playwrights must enhance conflict, tension, and revelation in order to keep audiences enthralled. In dramatizing real events, O'Neill played freely with chronology—compressing incidents that occurred over months and years into the one long day in which his play is set. Williams made a significant change by removing the Wingfield father from the play. (His own father, Cornelius, lived with the family while they were in St. Louis.) The absent father raised the stakes on Laura's dependency

and Amanda's desperation to provide for her children's future. Literary critic Gilbert Debuscher proposes the term "autofictional" to look at *Menagerie* as "the result of a conflation of real life and fantasy, the poetic (re)arrangement of fact within fiction, the imaginative fictionalization of autobiography."

Typically, autobiography centers around the author, with other people moving in and out of the narrative in relation to the central subject. The great family dramas, on the contrary, represent a group of people, all of whom have stakes in the action. Kennedy's portrait of the Muscolino family is proof positive that no matter how a playwright chooses to work in their family's past, the ability to find compassion for one's relatives is essential to creating characters we care about. •

THREE SISTERS AS ARCHETYPE

The three sisters at the center of *Napoli, Brooklyn*—Tina, Vita, and Francesca—exhibit great love and loyalty, and they protect each other in face of the violence, yet each sister pursues a unique path towards fulfillment. Kennedy's characters recall an archetype of "three sisters" that runs deep throughout mythology, folklore, and dramatic literature.

GREEK MYTHOLOGY

The Horai goddesses, Eunomia, Eirēne, and Dike, are sisters who preside over the seasons, nature, and the movement of time; they represent the conditions required for prosperous farming. Their sisters, the Moirai, are also known as the Three Fates and represent the force of destiny over human life. At a man's birth, they appear spinning, measuring, and cutting the thread of his life. Another triad of sister goddesses, Hera, Athena, and Aphrodite, compete in a beauty contest for a golden apple that starts the Trojan War.

SHAKESPEARE: KING LEAR

Lear's contest to his three daughters, Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia, to declare their love for him draws on a widely known folktale type, the "love like salt" story. Here, a misunderstood daughter is cast out when she cannot adequately articulate her love. Freud proposed that the youngest sister often represents hidden virtues that

are not easily seen, while the older sisters represent the deceptions of beauty and flattery. The tragedy shows the great costs of such misunderstanding.

ANTON CHEKHOV: THE THREE SISTERS

Chekhov told Vladimir Nemirovitch-Danchenko, co-founder of the Moscow Art Theatre: "I have a subject: three sisters. But I am not going to start working on the play until I finish the tales that are on my conscience." His creations, Olga, Masha, and Irina Prozoroff, are the opposite of the Fates, exercising no control over anyone's destiny. Each sister represents a different attitude towards time. The eldest, Olga, speaks largely of the past; youngest Irina fixates on the future; middle sister Masha acts in the present moment with little regard for the consequences.

WENDY WASSERSTEIN: THE SISTERS ROSENSWEIG

Wasserstein's 1992 comedy paid homage to Chekhov in its portrayal of three middle-aged, Jewish sisters, Sara, Pfeni, and Goregous. Wasserstein employed the triad of sisters to explore three different approaches to one's Jewish identity, and unlike her earlier work, here she presented the possibility of a successful middle-aged woman who makes her own choices but does not end up alone.

PARK SLOPE PLANE CRASH

At 10:30am on December 16, 1960, the 1700 students of St. Augustine's School at the corner of Sterling Place and Sixth Avenue in Park Slope were in class, sheltered from the cold sleet dripping down the windows. Minutes later, they looked out those windows and saw a damaged jet descend down Sterling Place, wings clipping the tops of nearby buildings, before crashing into the intersection at Seventh Avenue.

The "Park Slope plane crash," as it came to be called, was the deadliest aviation accident in U.S. history at the time. United Airlines flight 826 originated in Chicago and was bound for Idlewild Airport, now known as JFK. Trans World Airlines (TWA) flight 266 was en route from Columbus, Ohio, to LaGuardia Airport. The planes collided in the skies over Miller Field on Staten Island. The TWA plane, an older, propeller-driven Lockheed Super Constellation, broke apart and rained down on Miller Field and the surrounding neighborhoods of New Dorp and Midland Beach. The United plane, a year-old Douglas DC-8 jet, stayed airborne for 11 miles before smashing into the heart of Park Slope.

The crash was caused by a miscalculation by the United pilot. As he approached the New York Harbor, air traffic controllers sent him toward a navigational point near South Amboy, New Jersey, to enter a holding pattern and await clearance to land. Just before the collision, the pilot reported that he was approaching the navigational point—but his jet was already eleven miles past it. One of the jet's navigational radios was not working, which may have contributed to the miscalculation.

All 44 people on board TWA flight 266 died in the crash, but no one on the ground in Staten Island was injured. Damage to buildings was minimal. Park Slope was not as lucky. Six people on the ground, including two sidewalk

Christmas tree salesmen, a 90-year-old church caretaker, and a butcher shop employee were killed. Twelve buildings were damaged or destroyed. Firefighters worked through the day to control blazes.

There was one survivor of the crash: eleven-year-old Stephen Baltz of Wilmette, Illinois. Stephen, whose mother and sister had flown out two days earlier, was on his way to spend

Christmas with family in Yonkers. He landed in a snowbank, and a photo of him, face blackened with soot, sheltered by an umbrella and surrounded by concerned residents, was on the front page of afternoon newspapers that day. New Yorkers of all faiths latched onto his survival as a miracle. Stephen Baltz died at Methodist Hospital the following morning. He described the crash before he passed away, saying, "It looked like a picture out of a fairy book. Then all of a

sudden there was an explosion. The plane started to fall and people started to scream. I held onto my seat and then the plane crashed."

Footage from the scene in Park Slope was broadcast on television within hours of the crash, marking a shift in how the nation, accustomed to newspaper and radio coverage, experienced tragic news events.

After the crash, President John F. Kennedy convened a task force on air traffic control, and new regulations were enacted to prevent mid-air collisions. Today, scars of the crash can still be seen in masonry repairs at the intersection of Sterling Place and Seventh Avenue, though there is no memorial to the crash in Park Slope. In 2010, a memorial was erected in nearby Greenwood Cemetery, on a plot that holds unidentified, fragmentary human remains from the crash. There's also a memorial plaque inside New York Methodist Hospital, where Stephen Baltz died. •



DESIGNER STATEMENTS

EUGENE LEE—SET DESIGN

Designing *Napoli, Brooklyn* has really been an exercise in editing. It's always had a lot of locations, a lot of small scenes—"written like a movie," is what I say. But right from the start, Gordon and I both thought that the movie version should be the movie version—we're doing it on stage. And on stage you can get away with so much more by using so much less. Meghan has written a very poetic, very emotional, very expressive play. It's our job, mine and Gordon's, to figure out how to keep those core qualities intact as it comes off the page and into the world. Once we found our visual language—no walls, using items from the Muscolino apartment to create other locations whenever possible, and letting the characters exist not only in the scenes in which they had dialogue—the environment presented itself quite directly. And I choose that word, environment, because it feels less like a set or location, but more of an abstract space that functions as a container for all of the action and events in the play. Because this piece deals with real locations, real events, real people (albeit theatricalized and composited, in certain cases), we had lots of research to guide us. In one way, it's great because there are historical society archives just packed with great information. In another way, though, you can get caught up in designing the research—not the play itself. Hopefully, we've come up with something informed by research and true to 1960s Brooklyn life, but that exists solely as a vessel for Meghan's wonderful writing.

JANE GREENWOOD—COSTUME DESIGN

Meghan Kennedy's play, *Napoli, Brooklyn*, is really beautifully written—there is a poetry to it—the writing is very different from the other young writers whose plays I have worked on. There's a real love for the people and events that she's writing about and a care for these characters that you feel profoundly. Her writing almost makes you want to give the piece a look that's somewhat romanticized. When I first read the play, I was fascinated by the development of the three daughters and what a hard life they had. Because this family doesn't have much money, their clothing consists of hand-me-downs. They have very basic pieces that they are able to wear for most occasions and perhaps something special for Christmas. I'm sure they got some of their clothes at small shops in Brooklyn and that they made other things, but they certainly were not buying in any high end stores. Of course, people took care of their clothes then—they weren't made to be disposable like the clothes we have now—and people wore them year after year. For research, we trolled the internet, books and libraries looking for pictures of Brooklyn in 1960 and found as many photographs as we could of normal life during that era. We were excited to find pictures of the plane crash that is referenced in the play with people on the streets. I showed these pictures to Gordon Edelstein, the director, when we first met, and he was very taken by them. We used them all the time as a point of reference. We went to all the thrift shops and second hand stores in Connecticut because the play was first done at The



Napoli, Brooklyn Francesca costume looks

DESIGNER STATEMENTS CONT.

Long Wharf Theater in New Haven, and we tried to use as many pieces of real clothing that we could find. We made hardly anything. It shows in a way. The pieces that we found are real garments from the late '50s and early '60s and give the clothes the characters wear authenticity.

BEN STANTON—LIGHTING DESIGN

Meghan Kennedy's play *Napoli, Brooklyn* is a period piece that examines the socio-economic and religious pressures that children of immigrants often face. The tension between old and new ideas and customs. There are questions about sex and sexuality, about education, and a women's role in society. And most powerfully, it's about smart young women standing up for themselves and coming into their own. Although *Napoli* takes place before I was born, I've always felt a deep connection to this script. This is probably because the play takes place in the Brooklyn neighborhood in which I now live with my family, and the play references an actual plane crash that took place not far from our apartment. I remember hearing about the crash when I first moved to the area in the '90s, and I was always aware of the impact it had on the neighborhood. Eugene Lee's set is a constellation of locations, events, and icons of the 1960s Brooklyn neighborhood in which the play takes place. The set gives us just enough detail of the lives of these characters and allows us to fill in the blanks. The play flows from moment to moment seamlessly, and big scenic transitions are kept to a minimum. The lighting design attempts to reflect the rhythm of these characters' lives. Everybody is hustling, working hard, and driving forward while trying to find fleeting moments of peace and intimacy. We often show interiors and exteriors simultaneously and try to highlight the emotional underbelly of the scene while also giving the audience information about the time of day or the season. An exciting challenge of designing *Napoli* was finding a theatrical way of depicting the catastrophic event at the center of the play. In keeping with the rest of the design, our solution had to be effective without being too literal, and I think we achieved this. Ultimately the lighting is heavily influenced by what I see every day in my own life in this same neighborhood, living in a building that was built over 100 years ago that was most surely inhabited by a family just like the Muscolino family not so long ago.



FITZ PATTON—SOUND DESIGN

On first read, *Napoli, Brooklyn* has the feel of early Williams: emotional, atmospheric and many, many scenes—which is often a liability in our art form. Deftly, Gordon Edelstein, the director, clicked these together to solve the play and, in so doing, released its poetic spirit. He dissolved the scenic elements to the bare minimum in order to infer place, distributing these places across the stage and minimizing vertical surfaces that could catch light. Those decisions allowed Ben Stanton to illuminate just that part of the stage necessary to activate that place, leaving the rest of the world in shadow. Going from place to place now was as fast as a light cue. A landscape of fragmentary places lived in a void helped foreground the immigrant experience: their entire history behind them, yet still with them, and only a fragmentary understanding of the world before them. The soundscape of this play works as a kind of dark matter, or substance which you should not notice, but which keeps you inside the world, holds you close to the story and, while not itself emotional, flows through the story and the space to let the poetic spirit of the play expand and touch you. Sometimes the most quotidian sound can be the most impactful. The more fluid and imaginative sound textures in the play live in combination with light and the human voice. There are few rules that govern this design. Its language navigates challenges that are continually fresh, which, I think, points to a strength in the play. *Napoli, Brooklyn* is a rare pleasure to design. Poetically rich, Meghan's disciplined scene writing and a fluid and honest structure give it a grounded, honest and earthy poignancy.

PRE- AND POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY

HOW DOES A PLAYWRIGHT DRAW ON THEIR OWN NEIGHBORHOOD FOR INSPIRATION?

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

Napoli, Brooklyn is set in Park Slope in 1960 and is based in part on the playwright's mother's recollections of growing up there.

BRAINSTORM Ask students to create a top ten list of things that make their neighborhood, or the neighborhood around the school, unique and special. They can write about people, places, sounds, smells, and history. Students can work individually or in groups.

WRITE Ask students to imagine that they're showing a new classmate around the neighborhood, and to write a monologue pointing out all of the unique facets of the neighborhood to this person.

PERFORM Conduct a staged reading of students' monologues. How did each playwright bring their neighborhood to life for the new student? What words did they use? What sights or sounds did they conjure up? What's the overall impression they gave you of the neighborhood?

PREDICT Share some images of Park Slope in 1960, found in the Upstage Guide. How would you describe this neighborhood? What kind of stories do you imagine taking place there? How do you think it's similar to or different from the neighborhoods we just described?

POST-SHOW ACTIVITY

HOW DOES A PLAYWRIGHT USE HISTORICAL CONTEXT TO IMAGINE A SEQUEL TO *NAPOLI, BROOKLYN*?

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

REFLECT Discuss the last moments *Napoli, Brooklyn*. What choices do the characters make? What is left "open" about the ending? What don't we know?

RESEARCH Build an understanding of the play's historical context by reading the articles "World of the Play" (page 6-7) and "Women: Before the 60s Broke" (page 14-15).

WRITE Choose one character from the play. Use your research to help you imagine a year after the play concludes (1962). Write a monologue in which your character talks to someone else (either a new character from the play, or a new character of your invention). Make sure to incorporate your understanding of the historical context of the play, based on your research. Your monologue should address:

- How do you feel about what happened (the events of the play)?
- How did these events change you?
- What are you doing now? Where are you? Who is in your life? Who do you see from your family (if anyone)?
- What do you want now?

SHARE Allow students to read their monologues and ask them to discuss their choices about the characters. How did they use their knowledge of the play's historical context to imagine their sequel?

GLOSSARY AND RESOURCES



- BRUTE:** a savagely violent person or animal
When Tina fights back against him, Nic calls her a brute.
- CONVENT:** a Christian community under monastic views, especially one of nuns.
After having threatened her father's life, Vita was sent to a convent.
- GASH:** cut deeply
After the fight with her father, Vita has a gash on her nose
- MANGY:** in poor condition, shabby
Francesca thinks she looks like a mangy dog after cutting her hair.
- ROSARY:** a string of knots or beads used to count an arranged set of prayers
Vita carries a rosary with her at the convent.
- SCOWL:** an angry or bad-tempered expression
Celia points out that Tina often has a scowl on her face at work.
- STOWAWAY:** a person who hides aboard a ship or airplane in order to obtain free transportation or elude pursuers
Nic came to America as a stowaway.

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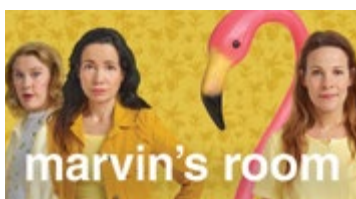


ABOUT ROUNDABOUT

ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

Roundabout Theatre Company (Todd Haimes, Artistic Director) is committed to producing the highest-quality theatre with the finest artists, sharing stories that endure and providing accessibility to all audiences. A not-for-profit company founded in 1965, Roundabout fulfills its mission each season through the production of classic plays and musicals; development and production of new works by established and emerging writers; educational initiatives that enrich the lives of children and adults; and a subscription model and audience outreach programs that cultivate and engage all audiences. Roundabout presents this work on its five stages and across the country through national tours. Roundabout has been recognized with 36 Tonys®, 51 Drama Desks, 62 Outer Critics Circle, 12 Obie and 18 Lucille Lortel Awards. More information on Roundabout’s mission, history and programs can be found by visiting roundabouttheatre.org.

2016-2017 SEASON



STAFF SPOTLIGHT: INTERVIEW WITH BETHANY BASILE, DIRECTOR OF FOUNDATION RELATIONS

Ted Sod: Tell us about yourself. Where were you born and educated? How and when did you become the Director of Foundation Relations?

Bethany Basile: I grew up in Boston in a family that really valued the arts. My mom was in the choir, my grandmother in musicals, my brother in plays. I grew up singing, dancing, acting, directing, producing—I knew I would be in the arts. I came to New York at 17 to study acting at Tisch (NYU) and quickly realized I needed more control, more challenge, and more stability. I worked as an usher for Shakespeare in the Park and was envious of the work being done “upstairs.” I applied to be an intern but had to work three jobs to afford living in the city. I gravitated towards fundraising, and I’ve been there ever since. And now I only have one job, and it’s great!

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

BB: Unlike most fundraising, I spend a lot of my time doing extensive research on our programs from New Works to Education to our Archives, and then I help create detailed written proposals for foundation professionals and board members to review. There is so much creativity in explaining an artist’s vision or showing how the arts can change the lives of young adults the way it did for me. I find after a long meeting about our programs, I am filled with passion for the work we do. But I’m a bit shy, and writing (hiding) behind a computer is where I am at my best.

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

BB: I absolutely love learning about the great work everyone is doing in this massive institution. I am in awe of people like New Play Director Jill Rafson, Director of Education Jennifer DiBella, and Archivist Tiffany Nixon. They create powerful programs with their specific expertise and ingenuity. They give a new life to the work we do on our stages, giving it a place to grow, change, and survive in the careers of artists and in our collections. I was particularly proud of the launch of the Theatrical Workforce Development Program—our technical training program for young adults—this year, and knowing that my fundraising made that happen was a pretty special moment. I have so much hope for these bright young adults! The hardest part of my job is waking up in the middle of the night remembering another thing that needs to get done. There is so much work to do and so little time.

TS: Why do you choose to work at Roundabout?

BB: One of my biggest interests is learning about different models and approaches that not-for-profit cultural institutions adopt. Roundabout is such a unique institution, and I had to learn about how one melds a Broadway theatre company with a community building cultural focus. What I’ve learned is that it’s really hard. I am forever impressed by our leadership and board for creating this landmark theatre company and am excited to see the way it evolves just after our 50th Anniversary. •

Learn more at roundabouttheatre.org. Find us on:



WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE

TICKET POLICY

As a student, 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 restroom 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.



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