

# BOBBIE CLEARLY

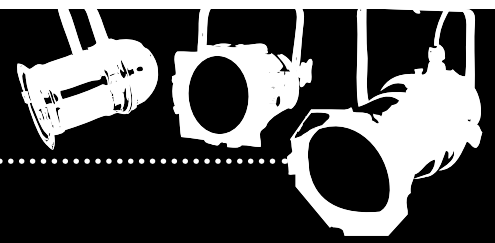


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**UPSTAGE** GUIDE  
A publication of **EDUCATION AT  
ROUNDAABOUT**

# UPSTAGE SPOTLIGHT



## BOBBIE CLEARLY

by Alex Lubischer

Directed by Will Davis

Something unspeakable happened in the middle of a cornfield two years ago. Now, at last, the upstanding residents of Milton, Nebraska—from the cop and the nurse to the co-captains of the dance team, and even Bobbie himself—are ready to tell you their sides of the story. Nebraskan Alex Lubischer, a second-year candidate in the Playwriting Program at Yale School of Drama and the newest voice discovered by Roundabout Underground, pushes the boundaries of our Black Box Theatre with a sprawling cast of eccentric characters and an ambitious narrative that pulls back the husk of rural life.

## A NOTE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TODD HAIMES

Alex Lubischer has painted a riveting and darkly hilarious portrait of small-town life, exploring how one community might heal, punish, and forgive in the wake of unexpected violence. The questions Alex asks about the limits of compassion and the morality of punishment are both timely and dangerous—which is exactly, in my opinion, why they must be asked.

**WHEN** The play begins in the fall of 2006.

**WHERE** Milton, Nebraska. Population: 750.

### WHO

**Bobbie Clearly:** young, white man who murdered Casey Welch, daughter of Jane and Stanley.

**Darla London:** Policewoman and CCD teacher, she is invested in her community, especially Bobbie's re-integration into the town.

**Eddie Welch:** Born on a farm, currently works at Apple. An atheist, openly gay. Brother of Casey.

**Derek Nelson:** Nurse, takes on the role of Bobbie's "big brother."

**Megan Currie:** Dance team co-captain, team manager, the alpha over her best friend and mirror-image, Meghan Gotschell.

**Meghan Gotschell:** Dance team co-captain, slightly subservient to best friend and mirror-image, Megan Currie.

**Pete Pfeifer:** Goofy, easy going, everyman, a light-hearted yet long lasting best friendship with talent show co-host, Mitch Backes.

**Mitch Backes:** Makes a good first impression but deep down he's ornery, stubborn, and doesn't back down.

**Russ Scott:** The cool counselor, former theatre major.

**Jane Welch:** Mother of Casey and Eddie. Got married and had kids young. The kind of mother who was always involved in the PTA, now spearheading a talent show in honor of her daughter.

**Stanley Welch:** Married to Jane. Stoic, caring father. Avid hunter. Deeply affected by the loss of his daughter.





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# INTERVIEW WITH PLAYWRIGHT ALEX LUBISCHER

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Playwright Alex Lubischer about his play *Bobbie Clearly*.

**Ted Sod:** Give us some background information on yourself: Where were you born? Where were you educated? When did you decide to become a playwright and why?

**Alex Lubischer:** I grew up on a farm near a small town called Humphrey in eastern Nebraska. The population of the town was about 750, and the size of my graduating high school class was 20. I loved writing and acting from very early on. In junior high, I devoured Stephen King books and tried to imitate them in would-be young adult novels I wrote on an old Dell computer. There wasn't much theatre to see, but I acted in one-acts in high school.

I found myself drawn to movies, and I decided at a young age that someday I would move out to California to become a famous actor. Well, that didn't happen. Or, it half-happened. I did move to California to attend the University of Southern California. I took my first playwriting class there freshman year, and sophomore year I produced my first play on campus. Putting it up, I kind of knew then that I wanted to be a playwright. There's something incredible about getting to see a story that began in your mind realized in front of you by fellow artists. When a scene lands or a climax elicits a gasp from an audience, you know that you've translated an emotional experience; you've reminded a crowd of people about some essence of life that we're usually too busy or distracted or exhausted or traumatized to notice on a day-to-day basis.

My favorite play is *Our Town*, and there's this exchange at the end of the play between two characters:

*EMILY:* Does anyone ever realize life while they live it...every, every minute?

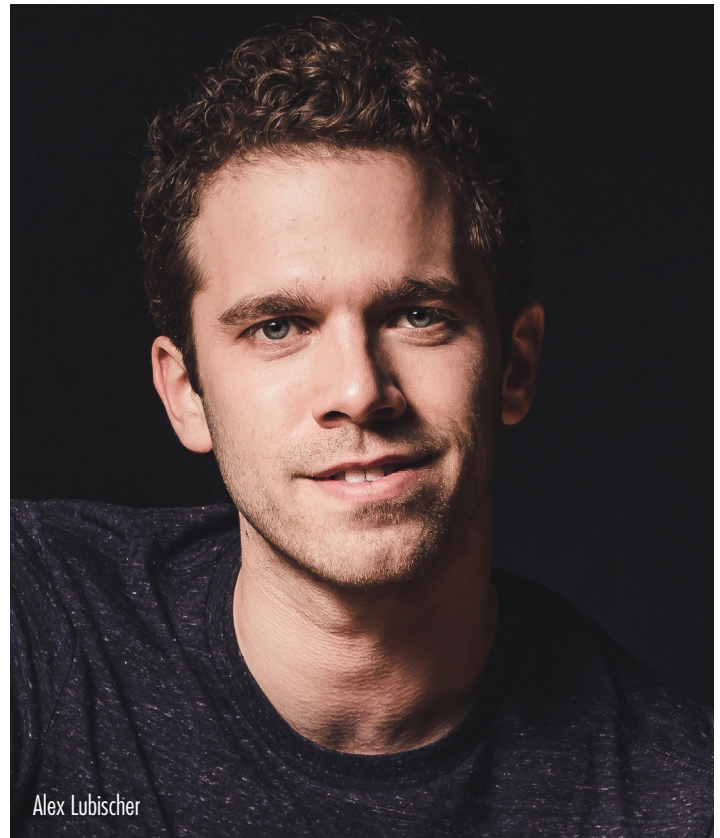
*STAGE MANAGER:* No. Saints and poets maybe...they do some.

And I think the job of the playwright is to tell a story that reminds an audience of what it's like to be alive.

**TS:** What inspired you to write *Bobbie Clearly*? What do you feel the play is about? Does the play have personal resonance for you and, if so, how?

**AL:** Because I grew up queer and closeted in a rural area of a red state, it has always been relatively easy for me to empathize with outsiders. Most of my plays are about outsiders. But with *Bobbie Clearly*, I wanted to write about a community—about insiders—not the pariah. I'm haunted by the small town where I grew up; I can't stop writing about it. And I think that *Bobbie*, accidentally—it's not that I set out to do this—became about me trying to love the town where I grew up, and to find understanding for a community that struggles with understanding.

At the time I was writing the first draft, there was an onslaught of mass shootings in America. In the aftermath of each shooting, the same pattern seemed to emerge. People would be horrified, then they would latch onto some reason this had occurred, trying to gather the tiniest clues to help them make sense of senseless violence. Some people would retreat from the world, and others would turn to activism—like Jane in the play. So that informed *Bobbie*, too: Americans have wildly different ideas about how to heal as a community in the wake of tragedy.




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

**AL:** The starting point for the play was a nonfiction book called *The Violence of Our Lives: Interviews with American Murderers* by Tony Parker. It was exactly that—a series of interviews, each with a person who had killed another human. What amazed me is that none of the testimonies felt sensational. Most were mundane. Epiphanies came slowly, if at all. A murderer's understanding of what they had done took years, sometimes decades, to coalesce. Afterward, I wanted to write my own (fictional) interviews—just pages and pages of characters talking. I wanted to listen to members of a community not unlike my hometown. I interviewed real people, too, which helped me write the fictional characters. I talked to my Grandpa about what it was like to be the small town cop for twenty years. I talked to my friend Tim's dad about deer hunting. I interviewed my friend Evan about what it was like to work at an Apple Store.

**TS:** What was the most challenging part of writing your play? What part of writing this play gave you joy? How did you come upon the idea of using direct address as part of documentation and public performance?

**AL:** The hardest part of writing any play is that it sucks and it sucks and it sucks until it finally works. You have to endure so many drafts of a play before it emerges as the play you imagined. I get pure joy when I'm writing the first draft of a scene and I've tapped into something essential in a character. Something deeply human. It's hard to describe, but I know it when I've done it because I'll have a visceral emotional response while I'm writing, and also the character will do or say something I didn't expect, which is wonderful because that also means the audience won't expect it. It





doesn't feel "written." The documentary aspect was a symptom of wanting to let these characters just talk at me and tell their stories. I thought, "What's an excuse to get a person to talk for a really long time?" Ah! They're being interviewed for a documentary! And then, like a documentary filmmaker, I found myself doing an enormous amount of "interviewing" and an enormous amount of editing. I would write six pages of interview, but only keep the best six lines. As for the public performance in the play—it was another sort of accident. I had written the act one talent show scene, along with a few interviews, and asked some actor friends to read the first act out loud in my living room in Chicago, where I lived at the time. People loved it. I loved it. I heard it out loud and thought, "That's really good." That feels right. So I decided to extend it throughout the whole play—the concept of these characters performing live in the midst of a documentary.

**TS: The character of Bobbie seems like an anti-hero. Do you see him that way? How did you go about creating a character who for some audiences may seem like a social pariah?**

**AL:** I don't think Bobbie's an anti-hero. To me, "anti-hero" points to someone who is not typically heroic, but who is a main character anyway, like James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause* or Jughead in "Riverdale." I don't think Bobbie is the main character, though. To me, the protagonist is the town. And the people who have the responsibility to be heroic are the townspeople. It's the citizens' journeys that we're tracking. I care about Bobbie a lot, but it's the group that has the greatest capacity for heroism or brutality, not the individual. What surprised me writing the play was how little of Bobbie—actual stage time and lines for the actor playing Bobbie—ended up being in it. I kept trying to give Bobbie a bigger part, but the more I tried to give him, the less compelling he became. With Bobbie—and, again, I think it's because the protagonist is the town—less is more.

**TS: The Tow Foundation has awarded you a residency at Roundabout this season. Can you tell us how The Tow Foundation residency has affected your work as a playwright?**

**AL:** I've been writing plays for the past ten years, and in that time I've been a waiter, I've worked at a UPS store, I've tutored, I've barista-d—I don't think that's a verb—I've been a barista. I've never been able to support myself on playwriting alone, until now. It's insane. I can just write! I'm savoring every minute of it. Oh, and the other fantastic thing is that it's allowed me to be in the offices at Roundabout. I've been able to work with the education department, chat about new plays across cubicles with Jill Rafson, and have readings of new scripts I'm writing with the artistic fellows here. It's incredible. Thank you, Tow Foundation. It's difficult for me to be articulate about this.

**TS: Can you describe what you look for in a director when working on a new play? How do you and Will Davis, the director, collaborate on *Bobbie Clearly*? What questions do you ask each other?**

**AL:** One thing great directors do is gather in amazing team of collaborators and help everyone thrive. They do this by being generous, by getting excited about the different gifts artists bring to the table, by creating an environment where people feel like they can take risks and be their authentic selves. I've seen Will do that—bring that out of people—constantly. I also love that he's a Chicago guy. I spent my formative years in Chicago after college. It's where I became a playwright. Will went to undergrad there and is currently the artistic director of American Theater Company in Chicago. So starting out, I think we already shared a lot of theatrical vocabulary and values. We both love *Our Town*. We're currently

binging true crime documentaries for research—okay, I feel like I'm gushing. But the point is that I met with many directors, and Will was the one who instantly came alive when discussing the play. His ideas for how to stage it were out-of-the-box; I would never have thought of them on my own. That's another thing about a good collaborator: there have to be some points of overlap—shared aesthetics, values, stuff you both love—but the parts of the Venn Diagram that don't overlap are just as important. Will has a mind for ensemble-building and a visual vocabulary that just wows me. Those are just two things—and there are many more—that I'm grateful he brings to the table. To be honest, we find ourselves talking a lot about corn.

**TS: Has the script changed since the reading at Roundabout last winter? If so, what was the catalyst for those changes? Do you expect to be rewriting during the upcoming rehearsal process and previews? If so, what usually motivates your rewrites when a play is being rehearsed and performed in front of audiences?**

**AL:** After the reading last January, I thought the second act could be tighter, so I pared it down. Once I get in the room with actors—and especially once previews start—I expect there'll be more rewrites.

The great thing about an audience is that they teach you about a play. You can take the temperature of the audience while you're sitting anonymously in the back row. You can tell when they're leaning in; you hear when they laugh; when they gasp. You can also hear when they settle back into their chairs, check their program, tune out. You adjust the script accordingly. I think we'll learn a lot in the first couple weeks of previews.

**TS: Who are your favorite playwrights? How do you keep yourself inspired as an artist?**

**AL:** My first fanboy crushes were Tennessee Williams, Chekhov, Shakespeare, and Eugene O'Neill. I've started reading more living playwrights as I've gone along: Annie Baker, Amy Herzog, Tarell Alvin McCraney, Caryl Churchill, Anne Washburn, Rajiv Joseph. I love An Octoroon by Branden Jacob-Jenkins. Simon Stephens and Alistair McDowall are two UK playwrights I love. Everyone should read *Brilliant Adventures*, *X*, and *Pomona* by Alistair McDowall because it feels like he's writing the best kind of '90s blockbusters—*Jurassic Park*, *Pulp Fiction*, stories with that kind of danger and joy—but for the stage. I keep myself inspired by reading nonfiction a lot: Maggie Nelson is incredible. And I've been on this Joan Didion tear. I wish I travelled more, because every time I do, I come back refueled and re-inspired and ready to dive into a new play. Luckily, the Tow Foundation residency will allow me to travel more this summer. I'll be seeing a lot of German theatre.

**TS: What advice would you give to a young person who says they want to write for the theatre?**

**AL:** Just start writing. And you have to be okay with some of it being bad at first. Cuz in your head, it's perfect, right? But getting it on the page, you realize that most plays will take a lot of time and revision before they're as wonderful on paper as they were in your head. That's okay. That's actually normal. That's how it is for me, and that's how it is for most of the playwrights I look up to. Risk, Fail, Risk Again. Perfectionism is the enemy of creativity. Find a community of friends and collaborators who will read your work and give you honest feedback. And make sure they're people you trust. Sometimes you luck out and these collaborators are classmates you already know. But it might take going out of your way, or even moving to a different city, to find a community that truly inspires you—and vice versa. •

# LIFE IN SMALL TOWN NEBRASKA

*Bobbie Clearly* is set in the fictional town of Milton, Nebraska.

Nebraska, which sits at almost the geographic center of the United States, comes from the Otoe Indian words for “flat water,” a reference to the Platte River, which flows through the state.

Nebraska is part of the Great Plains, and many current residents descend from European-Americans who moved west in the 1860s-1880s to farm and ranch. Today, Nebraska’s economy revolves around farming and cattle-raising. 93% of the land in Nebraska is farm or ranch-land (the highest percentage in the country), and 25% of all jobs are connected to agriculture.

As the playwright describes it, Milton is “a small town of less than a thousand. Technically, not even a town: a village.” In a town of that size, graduating classes may only have 20 students. Everyone knows everyone, and knows everyone else’s family. Go to the grocery store and you’ll run into your math teacher, who is also the school’s basketball coach. And your cousin, who works as the store’s cashier, will check you out.

Milton is a *rural* town, meaning that it’s not geographically near or economically connected to a larger city. Surrounded by cornfields, the town is dependent on the corn industry for its livelihood. If a major corn producer were to close or leave the area, many of the town’s residents would be unemployed, with nowhere else to apply for jobs. After high school, graduates have limited options for employment if they want to remain in town.



Hay bales in a field

Community engagement is high in small towns. Political and bureaucratic decisions happen locally, and residents can directly see the effect of their votes. For example, a town might vote on whether or not to pave a road. Each resident knows the road and knows how much more they’ll pay in taxes. Similarly, everyone knows those in law enforcement and elected positions personally.

Retail in a small, rural town is typically a grocery store, a dollar store, and a farm supply store. Other purchases require a drive to the nearest metropolitan area. Rural towns also usually support a post office, library, gas station, and one or two restaurants or bars. Businesses close early. Internet and cell phone service is slower, and residents have fewer options for carriers.



A rural gas station

Schools are the social centers of small towns. Sporting events (especially Friday night football games), concerts, and plays are major social events, and school buildings function as community centers, hosting meetings and events year-round.

Future Farmers of America (FFA) and 4-H Club are popular in rural areas. Both are youth development programs that focus on leadership and agricultural skills. Participants often raise livestock or crops and enter them into competition at local and state fairs.

Hunting, primarily for deer and turkey, is an integral part of the culture of rural places and is regulated by the state Game and Parks Commission as part of a broader conservation and resource management effort. Waking early, hiking, and waiting in the forest or fields for game is a rite of passage. The animals killed are butchered, frozen, and used for food throughout the year.

Milton, like small towns across the country, is a proud community with traditions and history closely connected to the land and the heritage of those who make it their home. •



# SMALL TOWN INFOGRAPHIC

What's the difference between a metropolis like New York City and the type of rural small town where *Bobbie Clearly* takes place? Consider these numbers for New York City and Beemer, Nebraska, hometown of playwright Alex Lubischer.

NEW YORK, NY

V S

BEEMER, NE

8,174,962



POPULATION

678

3,128,062



HOUSEHOLDS

291

434



HIGH SCHOOLS

1 (shared with nearby town)

207



LIBRARIES

1

1,050,911



BUSINESSES

9 (in 2015)

45,681



RESTAURANTS

2

250+



MCDONALD'S

1

2,207



CHURCHES

7

241



MOSQUES

0 (1+ hour drive)

177



SYNAGOGUES

0 (closest is 45 miles away)

80+



THEATRES

1 (community)

58



HOSPITALS

2 (within 20 minutes)

(Estimate: Includes Reformed, Conservative, Orthodox)



# INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR WILL DAVIS

**Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Director Will Davis about his work on *Bobbie Clearly*.**

**Ted Sod:** I wanted to start with some biographical information. Where were you born and educated? Why did you decide to become a director for the theatre?

**Will Davis:** I was raised in Santa Cruz, California, near San Francisco. I went to college in Chicago at DePaul University, and I went to graduate school at the University of Texas in Austin. I'm a director and a choreographer. I came to the theatre through dance. I studied ballet when I was a child, but when it became clear I wasn't quite ballerina material, I started to have important experiences with live performance in the theatre. Those experiences set me up for my artistic life pursuits, which I call "handmade spectacle" or "rough magic." Collaborating on handmade spectacles with other people and creating work that is actor-operated and -generated transports you. That's something I value and spend a lot of time tinkering with. When we make theatre, we present a very detailed fiction to an audience. We say, "Please believe this is a hotel room or my kitchen or whatever." There's something about that fiction that I find very moving. It feels like such a gift. It's so human.

**TS:** How do you begin your process with a new play?

**WD:** I use the same set of skills one uses to analyze a script to analyze what I refer to as "the physical score of a play." I build a physical score that's based on a few basic ingredients, and then I put them in dialogue with the spoken word. Let's say there's a pile of corn on the stage. I want the audience to see that corn transformed over the course of this play. When they leave, the corn should be totally different. Investigating the physical score of the play has a deep dramaturgical connection, and it has become a big part of my work. I also try to predict what is going to be the hardest part of any show I direct. And when I identify it, that's what I start with.

**TS:** Have you identified the hardest part of *Bobbie Clearly*?

**WD:** No. I ask myself this question because it makes me feel like a weather vane. I must locate myself emotionally in relationship to this play.

**TS:** How did you come to direct *Bobbie Clearly*, and how are you collaborating with the playwright, Alex Lubischer?

**WD:** Alex and I didn't know each other before this project. It's always exciting to make new friends. I have had a lovely relationship with Jill Rafson, Roundabout's Director of New Play Development, for a few years now. I directed a reading of another play as a part of the Underground Reading Series last year. When *Bobbie Clearly* was chosen for the 2017-18 season, I believe Jill connected me with Alex because the show offers so many possibilities to think expansively and theatrically about the world.

**TS:** What do you think *Bobbie Clearly* is about?

**WD:** It's about how a human being metabolizes trauma and how trauma becomes part of your DNA and animates your life. In Alex's play, we're watching a group of people traverse a huge expanse of their lives together. We're watching them constellate themselves. We



watch them imagine and reimagine their identities. I feel Alex's play is asking big, *Our Town*-esque existential questions around being, community, and the meaning of carrying on. And all this is being delivered with an idiosyncratic, almost *Waiting for Guffman* humor. Alex has said, "This isn't a monologue play and it isn't a docudrama." When you look at the text, you think it might be these things. Alex's play wants an abstract gesture—I believe that is what he intended. On the first page, before anyone starts talking, the play describes the sky as being hung with corn. That image tells me something wonderful about this world. The playwright is presenting this as a gesture of being in a psychological space. His characters are struggling consciously and unconsciously with being trapped.

**TS:** Does the play have personal resonance for you?

**WD:** Well, I am not from the Midwest. I am not from a small town, and I am not from a farming community. I don't have personal resonance in that way. But I am absolutely drawn to all these characters. What makes this play so funny is that each character is trying to create a life they can believe in out of imperfect materials. That's a universal thing. There's something about that that I find very touching. That's what we're all up to. Often, when we move through our lives, we see what's being presented or projected from the other person. But because of the structure of this play, we get to see these vulnerable characters who are trying to arrange their faces or clothes or relationships to look good for the camera. This is one of the universal themes of the play, and the humanity of that destroys me.

**TS: Why do you think the character of Bobbie decides to go back to a town where he's a social pariah?**

**WD:** I think it's a combination of things. I don't think it's as simple as wanting to set things right. That would be a less interesting play. I think Bobbie is the most incendiary example of what everyone in the play is doing. He is looking for a sense of belonging and comfort. I don't think he's coming back against his will. He's coming back to feel a sense of belonging in the community. We are never given a scene where he says: "I'm so sorry," because that would be unsatisfactory. That would minimize the complication of living in a small town and knowing everybody.

**TS: Do you think Bobbie has forgiven himself?**

**WD:** No. He's in this exquisite limbo. He can't undo the thing he's done. Nor does he have the facility to undo it. Part of that is because of the kind of person he is emotionally and psychologically. He's not rehabilitated.

**TS: When I read the play, it didn't strike me as a conventional "whodunit," but more of a "whydunit." Do you agree?**

**WD:** I love the "whydunit" appraisal. That is why I reference *Our Town* when I talk about this play. There's this "whydunit" aspect of the play,

which is also saying, "why anything?" That's part of the very large existential question that the playwright is asking and leaving us with.

**TS: I want to ask you about your research process for this play.**

**WD:** One thing that this play allows me to do is research style. I've been watching all the true crime documentaries that I can. The reason I'm doing this research is because I want to understand all the tropes, styles, and clichés of that form so I can manipulate them or play into them. I want to stock the pantry with all the ways this genre works because one of the great, sublime tensions of the play is that a character can be talking to another character, but they also have to deal with their second scene partner, which is this camera lens. There is an intrinsic human instinct to be concerned about being recorded. Whether we're conscious of it or not, we have a finite lifespan and the camera, this recording device, is infinite. It has Godlike qualities to it.

**TS: How will the play manifest itself visually?**

**WD:** In terms of design research and building the psychological world, I'm looking at the work of Pina Bausch, who was a choreographer. I feel the design needs elemental excess. It needs one thing and perhaps a thousand of those things. I have also been looking at the work of the visual artist Ai Weiwei. His work is all about repetition. A single object on its own signals us in one way, but if I give you a hundred of those objects, it means something else.

**TS: How do you keep yourself inspired as an artist?**

**WD:** My whole artistic methodology can be summed up in one phrase: how curious. I try to stay in a place of curiosity or wonderment. So, when things go really well or really badly, I think: "how curious." I try to keep a steady practice of never arriving. When I go to the theatre and see a show that I don't like, I still think "how curious" and ask myself, "What's here for me?" I ask myself, "How can I get fed here?" I try to think about abundance. I feel that life is too short to have a bad night at the theatre. You can go and not like something and still get something from it. Learn something about your aesthetic that you can work with some other time. I think if you're having a bad night at the theatre, it's because you are being lazy.

**TS: Do you have any advice for young people who want to direct for the stage?**

**WD:** What you should do is not wait for an invitation. If you spend too much time waiting for an invitation or waiting to find out if someone thinks what you're saying is good or bad, that is all a waste of time. Who you are as an artist is always enough. You are responsible to make work that only you can make, and that's not hard to do because there's only one of you. The responsibility is to honor what comes out of you and make it. •



Sasha Diamond, JD Taylor, and Gabriel Brown in *Bobbie Clearly*



# QUOTES ON SMALL TOWN LIVING



Living or working in Manhattan, it's easy to forget what it's like to grow up somewhere where everyone knows your name. We collected memories from Roundabout staff members and notable small-town natives.

Everybody wants you to do good things, but in a small town you pretty much graduate and get married. Mostly you marry, have children and go to their football games.

- Faith Hill, Musician

There was not a lot to do. We had one restaurant, one bakery, a small library that sometimes put on plays, and the college itself. For more variety I had to go to surrounding towns.

- Melissa Brewer, Roundabout Theatre Staff

I felt very safe growing up in a small town. Almost everyone I encountered either knew me, or my parents. Once during a snowstorm I got my car stuck in a ditch and some guy just came along and pulled me out. Of course he knew my dad.

- Emily Stevens, Roundabout Theatre Staff

"In a small town where everyone knows everyone it is almost impossible to believe that one of your acquaintance could murder anyone. For that reason, if the signs are not pretty strong in a particular direction, it must be some dark stranger, some wanderer from the outside world where such things happen."

- From East of Eden by John Steinbeck

My least favorite part was that it was a bit stifling - especially when I hit my teen years and wanted to experiment and try on new behaviors and beliefs from what I'd always had. I was already in a box - and anything that varied from that was commented on or gossiped about.

- Anonymous

One of the pleasant things about small town life is that everyone, whether rich or poor, liked or disliked, has some kind of a role and place in the community.

- Edward Abbey, Author

"People in small towns, much more than in cities, share a destiny."

- Richard Russo, Author





# CORN DETASSELING

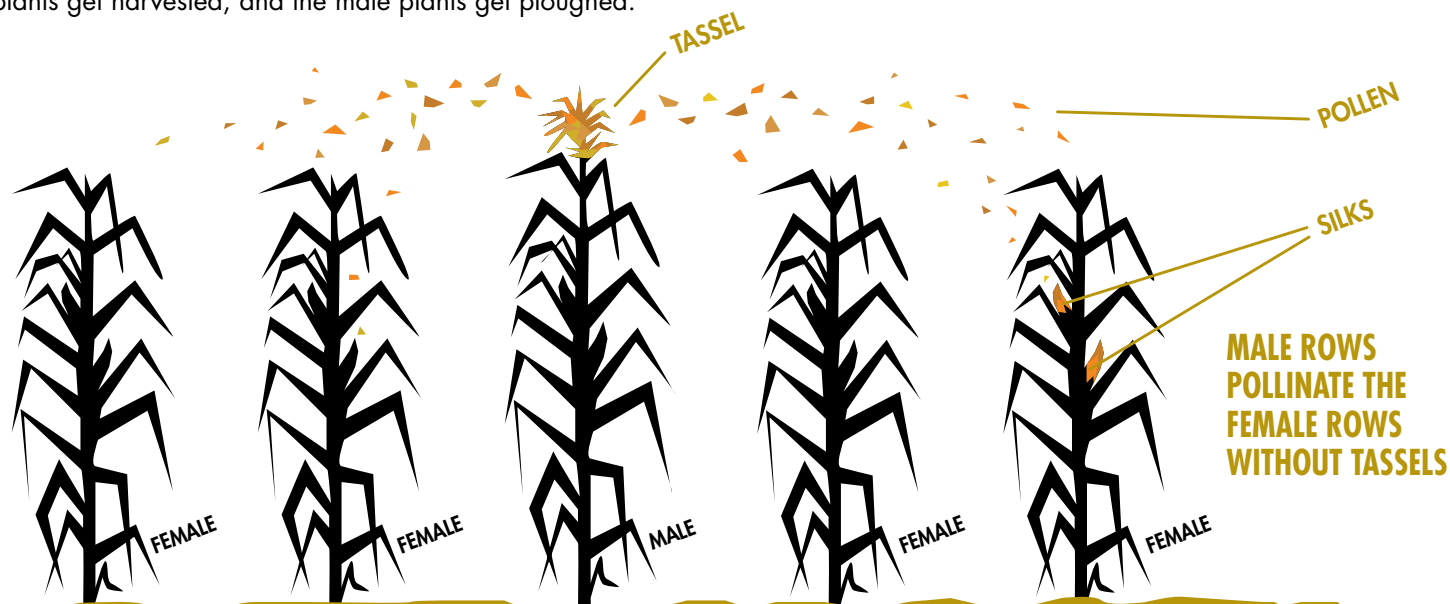
## WHAT IS CORN DETASSELING?

Every corn plant has both male and female parts—the tassel and the silk, respectively. Detasseling is the process of removing the male parts of some rows in a cornfield in order to create strictly female plants, which can then be pollinated by the remaining male plants in the field. While mechanical pullers are used to pull as many tassels as possible, they typically only get about 70% of them, meaning that the rest have to be pulled by hand.



## WHY DETASSEL?

Detasseling produces hybrid corn, which produces healthier corn crops with higher yields, as well as seed for the following year's crops. In order to produce hybrid corn, plants have to be prevented from self-pollinating. Removing the tassels from some of the rows in a field ensures that the male plants fertilize the female plants. Once the corn is fully matured, the female plants get harvested, and the male plants get ploughed.



## WHO DOES THIS?

Detasseling is a common summer job for teenagers in the Midwest—so much so that it's practically a rite of passage. Detasseling season often only lasts about three weeks in August, and with millions of acres of corn planted in the US, many hands are needed to get the job done. The work is grueling but necessary, pays well, and is often a great way to connect with other area teenagers as well.

## HOW DO YOU PREPARE FOR DETASSELING?

Detassellers wake up at the crack of dawn and are typically deployed to their field for the day in a bus with their co-workers. In preparation for a day of work, detassellers need to dress both for the heat and for the wet and often scratchy corn plants they will be walking through. They also typically wear bright-colored jackets in order to remain visible among the tall cornstalks. Detassellers typically work 10-hour days, and the pressure is high—in order for a field to “pass,” only 3 tassels in 1,000 can be missed.

# INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR ETHAN DUBIN

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with actor Ethan Dubin about his role as Bobbie in *Bobbie Clearly*.

**Ted Sod:** Tell us about yourself: Where were you born and educated? When and why did you decide to be an actor? Did you have any teachers who had a profound influence on you?

**Ethan Dubin:** I was born and raised in Pasadena, California, a suburb in Los Angeles County. I didn't know I wanted to be an actor from day one; it took some time. But I was always performing in some way or another. I was bad at sports (like, no-one-goes-to-lunch-until-Ethan-hits-a-baseball-during-gym, bad-at-sports) and compensated with a class clown mentality. My high school and my family were really focused on academic achievement, but I was lucky to have two phenomenal acting teachers, Tina and Cynthia, who consistently made the best high school theatre around (yeah, that's right). They nurtured my curiosity, and they also recognized the weirdo in me. One taught me Viewpoints and Suzuki when I was sixteen, and the other sent me to go see a Robert Wilson musical my junior year, which she knew would explode my brain. It did. Theatre always gave me a place to escape to, so I guess in hindsight it makes sense that I wanted to go to school someplace where I didn't know anyone at all. For me that was the frigid Midwest and Chicago. It didn't take long at school to figure out that I wanted to do something in the theatre. When I graduated, I still hadn't quite figured out what. I thought I'd start telling people I was an actor just to see how it fit. And it's still fitting.

**TS:** Why did you choose to play the role of Bobbie in *Bobbie Clearly*? What do you find most challenging about playing this role? Does the role have personal resonance for you? If so, how?

**ED:** I am humbled at the opportunity to play a character as complex, beautiful, and challenging as Bobbie. I have always been attracted to playing outsiders, weirdos, people who desperately want to fit in and to be liked. I relate to them. In their efforts to try to be liked, these characters often have to be incredibly courageous, especially when their actions may be clumsy, misguided, or downright painful to witness. I've never played an outsider as polarizing as Bobbie. I immediately connected to how raw and vulnerable he is, and how pure his hopes are to make amends with the people of his hometown. With this horrific crime behind him, he wants so badly to do the right thing, to prove that he's worthy of forgiveness. At best, he is the elephant in the room, and far more often he's the target of wild and justified hatred. It's an amazing challenge to try to imagine what that would be like—for me, and for our audiences. I found a statistic that in 2016 there were an average of five gun-related homicides of children or teens every day. I didn't grow up in a town like the Milton, NE we see in Alex's play. But the story of *Bobbie Clearly* is all too familiar and recognizable to me growing up and living in this country.

**TS:** In your opinion, what is the play *Bobbie Clearly* about?

**ED:** For me, this play is about the act of forgiveness and how we get along as a community in the wake of a tragedy. Far too many small American cities and families have had to grapple with a tragedy like we see in the play. How do you move on? How do you learn to feel safe again? How do you punish the criminal, and does he deserve a place back in the society he harmed? If so, would you help him? I can



remember several mass shootings in recent history where the families of the victims have announced their forgiveness of the murderer hardly a day after they lost their loved ones. And I've wondered what this really means, what this really feels like. Could I forgive someone like that for a crime so heinous? Or even if I thought I could, what would it be like to have that forgiveness tested if and when I saw him face to face? There are so many painful complexities in how a traumatized community tries to coexist and move on. Some people feel their very identity has been changed forever and want to spend their lives memorializing the victim, while others want to get as far away from the memory as possible. One of the things I love about Alex's play is how honestly he portrays this, and how funny and awkward it can be along the way.

**TS:** What is your process as an actor? What is the first thing you do? How do you research a role like Bobbie?

**ED:** With a few weeks to go before rehearsals, I'm gathering research and mining details from the script. Through books, movies, clips, what have you, I'm trying to spend time with people who may have similar circumstances to Bobbie or resemble some part of his life. That could be anything from a man serving a life sentence in prison for a murder he committed as a minor, to just what it's like for a bunch of high school kids in Nebraska to pile onto a bus to go detassel corn and make some ice cream money. I want to get a sense of the textures and rhythms in the text. And I also want to figure out what facts I know from the script, and what questions I'm going to have in the rehearsal room. Especially with a play like this, I start with a timeline, trying to organize everything I know for sure about Bobbie so I can start to draw a narrative for





myself of how his life has been through that chronology. I want to get to know this world so that in rehearsals I'll be ready to meet the people inside of it.

**TS: Can you share some of your preliminary thoughts with us about Bobbie and his relationship to the community in Nebraska that he comes from? How do you see the relationship between Bobbie and Casey? What about between Bobbie and Darla?**

**ED:** We're in a really small town in Nebraska, where the murder of Casey affects everyone. As Derek tells us about halfway through the play, when Bobbie walks into a store or someplace in public, 90% of the people know who he is, and the other 10% are about to find out. Bobbie has been released back into the town he's harmed, and the ripples of his crime are felt everywhere. They've ripped apart his family and any comfort and security he may have once had as a boy. It takes monumental steps to regain any trust, and the little of it he comes by is tenuous. I have so many questions about Bobbie's relationship to Casey. I think his feelings about Casey have as much or even more to do with his feelings about Eddie, a boy he once had tons of power over, and then none. In Darla, I think Bobbie finds possibly the only example of a benevolent authority figure in his life. We don't see him interact with other authority figures, but I get the feeling Darla has always expressed some kindness even in moments of deep disappointment, and that's been a huge exception from a lot of other adults. I'm eager to discover more about Bobbie's relationship with his family, what his home life was like. Seeing children display deep rage isn't all that unfamiliar to us, but when a temper tantrum goes too far into something unknown,

we always want to know why; we're hungry to be able to point to one concrete, definable event or reason in the child's life and say "that's where the anger comes from." And one of the reasons I love this play is because I'm not sure it's ever that simple.

**TS: What do you look for in a director when working on a new play?**

**ED:** I love a director who really trusts and respects actors. Someone who knows how to open the door for you and then step aside to let you walk through it. When I'm in a rehearsal process, I always want to have the time and the space to go too far and push the limits of a scene or a moment past what I think they "should" be. Working on a new play, you're in uncharted territory and you want to stretch the text and discover the boundaries. When I'm really jamming with a director, I think she sets me free in the moment, sometimes pushing or pulling in directions I didn't know I needed to go, while keeping a bird's eye view of how any one scene ripples through the rest of the play. I feel free to make new choices all the time, and only afterward do I see the framework that was being built invisibly around me. And at the end of the day, I love a director who asks questions, but also knows that rehearsals are about trying on answers. There isn't really a right one, so you just pretend there is until you figure out which ones are the strongest, the juiciest, the most essential for the story.

**TS: How do you keep yourself inspired as an artist?**

**ED:** I love theatre, and I see a ton of it. Making plays is hard, it just is. And my community of theatre artists in New York inspires me all the time. I'm also amazed by how much inspiration I find in other forms of performance. Maybe it's music or dance or an exhibition at a museum—I'm frequently amazed by how much inspiration I'll get in acting from other creative forms. I try to take advantage of being in New York and take in as much as I can. And I try to keep things fresh, keep myself taking risks and doing the unfamiliar. A mentor of mine in high school said that, as a working actor, you have to keep your body engaged in some kind of movement practice, no matter what that looks like. A few months ago I started doing an Israeli dance/movement form called Gaga (no, not Lady). It's all about providing your body with a framework for discovery and going outside of what's familiar. It's awesome. You should try it. I think it makes me a better person, so probably a better actor, too.

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

**ED:** Champion each other. It's too easy to focus on the negative in what we do. But you'll just hold yourself and your community back. Instead, find all the chances you can to talk about who inspires you, about someone in your community who's doing amazing work. Be a champion for them, and someone's going to come back around and be a champion for you. And another thing. I had an acting teacher here in the city say that no matter what job you're doing, do the best you possibly can at that job. With all the crazy side-jobs we actors do in this city, that advice really stuck with me, and I think it's absolutely true. You'll keep your integrity, strengthen your discipline, and nurture your curiosity. You'll also get bored. And boredom, it turns out, can be a powerful thing for an artist. •

# THE MANY FOLDS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

*Bobbie Clearly* explores the ways in which the small, fictional town of Milton, Nebraska, contends with a murderer who attempts to re-enter their tiny community years after his brutal, high-profile crime rocked the town. Each citizen of Milton responds to the criminal's return in complex and conflicting ways, and through their responses they reveal their individual modes of social control—that is, the ways in which they attempt to maintain a “social order” and punish those who violate their rules. Methods of social control differ from community to community and from person to person, but sociologists have identified patterns of social control that can help us understand how and why the characters in *Bobbie Clearly*—or the members of any community, for that matter—punish their society's transgressors, and can help us explore the psychological implications of enduring such retribution.

Sociologists tend to define two forms of social control: formal and informal. Formal social control refers to laws and regulations that governments impose onto their constituents in order to maintain stability and organization within a society. Fees for traffic violations, prison sentences for felonies, and capital punishment for murder or treason all fall into the category of formal social control in the United States. Informal social control, on the other hand, encompasses the actions of community members to pressure one another into conforming to often unwritten social “codes” that uphold the community's standards of decency and morality. This might refer to actions as overt as “taking the law into one's own

hands” by intervening in a crime or engaging in an act of vigilante justice, or as subtle as shunning or excluding rule-breakers from social groups. All these forms of social control aim to correct perceived unruly behavior or deter citizens from creating any form of “instability” or “chaos” within a society.

*Bobbie Clearly* specifically explores the mechanisms and effects of informal social control, and in particular social ostracism. Social ostracism is a form of informal social control that involves intentionally excluding and ignoring a member of a society in an attempt to punish them for a perceived crime or banish them altogether—and it is as effective as it is painful. Indeed, human beings (and many other animals) seem to be hard-wired to avoid social ostracism; being excluded from a community can quite literally sentence an animal or person to death, whether in the wild or on the streets of a big city. Classic research in psychology has shown that people will go to almost any length to avoid exclusion or ostracism from their community, including wholesale conformity, uncharacteristic violence, and refusal to extend assistance to those outside of the group who need it. Recent studies have revealed the deep psychological pain of social ostracism and its negative effects on one's sense of self-esteem, control, and purpose. The threat of social ostracism is often enough to encourage compliance and rehabilitation in those who have transgressed.







Forms of informal social control can inflict physical harm as well. Many societies use and have used violence as a tool to “keep others in line.” Duels in Europe and America in past centuries exemplify this kind of enforcement of unofficial laws—and could often result in death. The Cheyenne of the American Plains were known to kill each other’s horses as a means of punishing violators of the social code; in parts of East Africa in past decades, houses were frequently burned

for similar reasons; and Netsilik Eskimos have been known to encourage their children to pillage another’s food supply in order to exact revenge. Most communities, in an effort to encourage a more peaceful populace, employ and quietly encourage forms of informal social control that would be considered crimes in other situations and other societies.

Why, sociologists and philosophers ask, does informal social control so often take the form of punishment, rather than warmth or rehabilitation? Why go out of your way to burn down another’s house, or cut ties with a violator who has not specifically harmed you? There is much written on why people punish, but one particularly interesting idea in the context of *Bobbie Clearly* is the expressive theory of punishment, put forward by philosopher Joel Feinberg.

Feinberg identified “punishment” as a way in which any individual members of society might openly distance themselves from a crime or perpetrator and position themselves as outwardly disapproving of a violation of social codes. In other words, punishing another serves as a way to communicate to the rest of a group that one is separate from the crime or the criminal. To this end, Feinberg contends that punishment might therefore serve to:

- 1) disavow a transgression in authoritative and proclamatory terms
- 2) symbolically communicate one’s noninvolvement in a crime
- 3) “vindicate” a rule that has been violated
- 4) place responsibility on one perpetrator to deflect blame from any others.

In this framework, the actions of the characters in *Bobbie Clearly*, and even in real-life communities, become clearer. It might be that, when asking oneself how to interact with or respond to a perpetrator, a community’s answers and actions might tend to revolve less around the violator and more around one’s own position to the crime. “How can I hurt this person for the pain they caused?” might be less common than, “Which side do I want everyone to know I’m on?”

Social control, then, is more complicated than good versus evil, criminals versus heroes, and selfishness versus altruism. As the title of *Bobbie Clearly* itself facetiously suggests, the dynamics of power and punishment in the wake of a crime are actually not clearly drawn at all. •



Constance Shulman as Darla London, the policewoman in *Bobbie Clearly*

# STYLE AND INFLUENCES

## STYLE (AS LISTED IN THE *BOBBIE CLEARLY* SCRIPT)

This play is composed of interviews, recordings, and public presentations.

The audience is a group of interviewers and sometimes they are spectators at a public event.

The characters are always aware of the audience and speak to the audience.

They know they are being documented.

There are no private moments.

*Bobbie Clearly* depicts a town being documented by a film crew over the course of eleven years. Revealing information via interviews makes for no private moments. Since the characters are aware they are speaking to a camera, the audience gets to see them both performing a particular version of themselves for the public and their natural interactions that come out despite the camera being present. Below is a list of genres, films, and television shows that *Bobbie Clearly* is influenced by or deviates from.

## DOCUMENTARY THEATRE

Documentary theatre, also known as docudrama or verbatim theatre, is a genre of theatre that is created directly from historical and archival materials, transcripts, interviews, newspapers, or biographies. What separates *Bobbie Clearly* from documentary theatre is that this play is fiction; it is not based off of real life events. Even the town where it takes place—Milton, Nebraska—is made up. Meanwhile, documentary theatre is usually pulling directly from specific sources, which allows us to key in on a specific community. For instance, the community of Laramie, Wyoming, after the killing of Matthew Shepard in 1998 is the setting of Moisés Kaufman's *The Laramie Project*. Crown Heights, Brooklyn, during the 1991 race riots is the crux of Anna Deavere Smith's play *Fires in the Mirror*. These plays are rooted in historical events and specific geographies while *Bobbie Clearly* is set in a fictional, rural town with events and characters who have been imagined by the playwright.

## DOCUMENTARY DEVICE IN TELEVISION

"The Office" (2005-2013) is centered around the employees working at a paper company called Dunder Mifflin in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The premise of the show is that a documentary crew has come in to film the lives of Dunder

Mifflin's employees. In order to get a documentary feel, it is shot single-camera as opposed to a multi-camera set-up, where many cameras are recording the shot from different angles, like we see on most sitcoms. The single camera has to be moved and set up again each time there is a new angle or shot. It also leaves space for interview sections in which the characters are alone, revealing information directly to the audience, similar to *Bobbie Clearly*.

The trend of this documentary style continued in other television shows made after "The Office." Both "Parks and Recreation" (2009-2015) and "Modern Family" (2009-present) use single-camera setup and utilize the interview-style confessionals that "The Office" does. All of these shows can also be considered "mockumentaries"—or works that take the form of documentary in a fictionalized, comedic manner. In all of these shows we also see breakout moments where characters look directly at the camera for emphasis. In theatre, when a character breaks the scene and communicates directly to the audience, this is called "breaking the fourth wall." On "Parks and Recreation" and "Modern Family" there is no stated premise of a documentary crew recording the lives of these folks; the audience assumes there is a reason these people are being documented even though it is never made explicit. Our culture has latched on to this style because, as we see in *Bobbie Clearly*, it gives us private moments between character and audience in such an intimate way that we do not normally see on screen or stage. It allows us to see a duality of these characters: their actual selves and the performed version of themselves for the camera, how they want to be seen by the world.

the office

Parks<sup>and</sup>  
Recreation

modernfamily

Listed below are three works that Alex Lubischer has mentioned as influencing his writing. Each of these are very different in style, and their impact on *Bobbie Clearly* can be seen in a variety of ways, from his fascination with the minutia of small town life to his non-fiction lens on a fictionalized town.

### THORNTON WILDER'S *OUR TOWN*

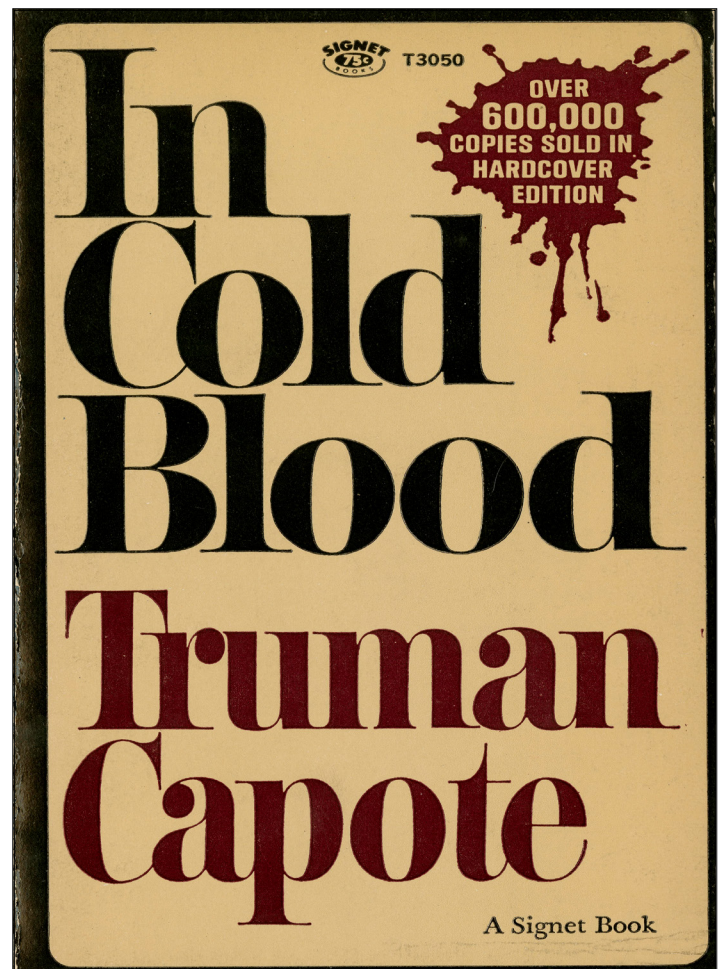
"What is this extraordinary thing [humanity]? There are millions of us but why are we, individually, so beautiful too?" -Tappan Wilder, nephew of Thornton Wilder

In his interview on page 4, Alex Lubischer mentions that theatre should reveal "the essence of life" that occurs on stage that we do not normally notice in our day to day lives. It could be said that people go to the theatre to watch lives happen, in order to remind ourselves that we are alive. Thornton Wilder, the playwright of *Our Town*, does this in his play about the residents of Grover's Corners, New Hampshire. Wilder was obsessed with the human race's persistence to survive and the inability to appreciate life in the moment. His writing contains an inherent optimism that exists in every character on stage. The same conceit goes for *Bobbie Clearly*. Here is a play centered around a murder in a small town in Nebraska. We get to watch how each individual character has a way of surviving, an idea that is inherently optimistic. We even see this in the character of Bobbie, a murderer, which in turn allows us to see them and empathize, one of the most powerful tools we have in the theatre.

### IN COLD BLOOD, TRUMAN CAPOTE

"The human heart being what it is, murder was a theme not likely to darken and yellow with time," -Truman Capote

This non-fiction book published in 1966 chronicles the 1959 murder of the Clutter family in Holcomb, Kansas. Truman Capote spent time in the small farming town with fellow writer Harper Lee (*To Kill A Mockingbird*), interviewing residents in order to gather information about the family, the murderers, and the night it occurred. Capote coined the term "nonfiction novel" to describe his book, a genre that could fuse journalism with creative writing. The author felt that in order to combine these two genres, the topic of the story would have to be one that would stick in the readers' minds. Because the content of the book is based off a real crime, some consider *In Cold Blood* a part of the true crime genre.



### FARGO, THE COEN BROTHERS

"We wanted to make a movie just in the genre of a true story movie. You don't have to have a true story to make a true story movie." -Ethan Coen

*Fargo* is a film about the investigations of roadside homicides that occur after a car salesman sets up the kidnapping of his wife in order to ransom his father-in-law. This black comedy, written and directed by Joel and Ethan Coen, is a fictional story, though they open the film with text that states this is a true story. This caused a lot of controversy when the film came out because, while the basic events are based on an actual case, all characterizations are imagined. In a *Time Out* interview, Joel Coen explained that "if an audience believes that something's based on a real event, it gives you permission to do things they might otherwise not accept." Similarly, *Bobbie Clearly* is a play that is meant to feel as if these are real events, taking place with real people, although it is completely fictional. •



# DESIGNER STATEMENTS

## ARNULFO MALDONADO—SET DESIGN

*Bobbie Clearly* by Alex Lubischer is exciting in its structure and unique storytelling—I was immediately struck by how engaging the interview format can feel within a theatrical context. What is the setting for such a world? In the film/documentary version of this play, these subjects would be interviewed against a static background. But this play spans both various locations and time. So, it was important for us to create a flexible environment that could easily transport us to different locations and times and that the audience be as much a part of the transformation of the space as the characters in it (thus the thrust seating configuration we've come up with for the space). As with any new play, before even getting into the practical specifics of what the play demands, I like to immerse myself in the emotional feeling of the piece. This sometimes involves music. What would be playing at the time on the radio in Nebraska? Music for me is always a helpful tool in terms of delving into the emotional landscape of these characters; I can create a narrative for myself by thinking about each of these characters' personal tastes (and there is definitely a wide range of personalities and tastes within this small town). From there I started looking at photographs that weren't necessarily about any specific location in the script but rather, again, the feel, of the play. I first landed on this image above. There is something both haunting and beautiful about this photo. Similar to our story. What is being kept behind this structure?



An example of a corn crib, which inspired the set of *Bobbie Clearly*

Is it a refuge? Is it dangerous? Unclear. Coincidentally, this particular structure in the photo houses corn (these are known as corn cribs). From here Will and I looked at various structures that would potentially live in our world (grain bins, corn cribs, corn fields). Similar to the image, these structures were both beautiful in their form and also dangerous in their capability to cause harm. I also found it helpful to look at documentaries that play with a similar interview/

documentary structure. Documentary-series like "The Thin Blue Line", "Making A Murderer", "Amanda Knox", and "The Jinx" were all helpful in terms of understanding how each one crafted a narrative of real-life events. In some cases these were served via stylized reenactments, and in others it was about letting one's imagination run wild by hearing a subject's retelling of particular events. Alex's description for the set is: "An acre of corn hangs above a bare stage, tassels down, as though the sky is the earth." Aside from the rich visual these words provide, I was also taken by Alex's word-play, in how he laid them out on the page. How does one bring that much punch of a descriptor to a space that is not much taller than one of our actors, with no fly space? Will and I embraced the limitations

of the space and its literal basement-ness. The "acre of corn" visual felt important in that the corn (field) felt like a vital extra character in the play; it was important for us to retain the feeling of Alex's words in that sense. Thus, why we are surrounding not just the characters in the play, but the audience themselves, in corn-crib walls. The corn is contained behind wire, but at any point this wire can give way...or not. It's that tension that is at the root of the design.



### ÁSTA HOSTETTER—COSTUME DESIGN

The event that precipitates *Bobbie Clearly* is a tragedy. Bobbie is our central character because he has committed a crime that has changed the life of the community forever. The reactions to that crime range from devastation to curiosity. To some characters, Bobbie is a demon to be avoided; to others, a human deserving forgiveness. Playwright Alex Lubischer gives us no instruction or footholds to “answer” this question. My main job is to craft this wide range of individuals with love enough to allow us access and feeling for all of them. My preparation for this had most to do with the small town of Milton, NE. In the midwest, corn detasseling is a job hundreds of young people work at a time. Though the masks and gloves that they wear will not be seen onstage, their sweaty exuberance in a gigantic field is important background to understanding the moment of this crime. I like to think that my work parallels the work of an actor: to be a sensitive collaborator in theatre, one has to be prepared to respond to the present moment of the rehearsal room. Meghan and Megan, characters in this play, are simultaneously two unique individuals and total twinsies. The joy of a well-written text is that there are a number of ways these characters could be embodied – both physically and emotionally. They need to be able to giggle like sisters and repel one another as if they were strangers. It’s a fun challenge for a designer to take up.

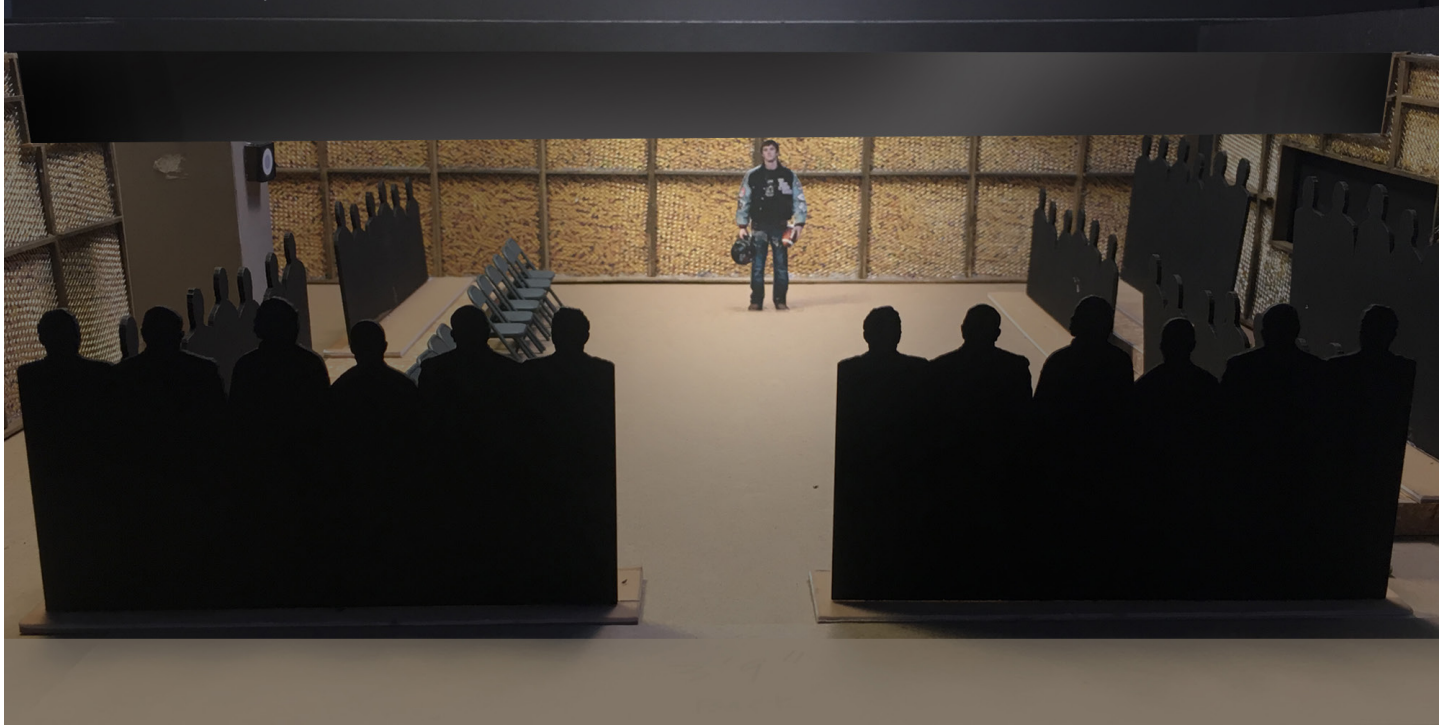
### PALMER HEFFERAN—SOUND DESIGN

*Bobbie Clearly* is framed through interviews for a documentary. As scenes evolve, this lens morphs, turning single interviews into split-screen, and shifting to a theatrical world outside of the interviews. Establishing the perspective of the audience was my first task. What do they see and hear? The audience is a spectator that moves between documentary interviewer, an audience member at an event, and an observer in an undefined place. The magic of sound design is that it can invisibly move the audience fluidly between these viewpoints.

I began by listening to documentary films and radio broadcasts. I was struck by the sonic presence of interview locations. Whether they had the intimacy of a quiet studio, or the omnipresence of nature in a park, the environment gave authenticity to people's stories. In *Bobbie Clearly*, location ambiances create the foundation of the aural landscape.

The play spans years, giving the audience multiple first person perspectives of a single event that comes to define the lives of those involved. As the play progresses, nondiegetic sounds seep into the design, creating expressionistic layers in the shifting naturalistic world. •

The set model for *Bobbie Clearly*





# PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

FOR  
EDUCATORS

## HOW DOES A DIRECTOR MAKE DECISIONS USING STAGE DIRECTIONS?

(Common Core Code: CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.9-10.2)

Before seeing *Bobbie Clearly* students will analyze stage directions that playwright Alex Lubischer writes and will make decisions about how to stage a scene utilizing both the stage directions given and their own creativity or vision.

- PREPARE** Read the excerpt of *Bobbie Clearly*, (available [HERE](#)) out loud in groups.
- DISCUSS** Talk about the context of the scene, the relationships between characters (both on and off stage), and the stage directions given by the playwright. Think about why the stage directions given are so specific, but do not assign a particular song.
- ASSIGN** Pick a song that you, as a director, would choose that fulfills both your vision for this scene and the playwright's intentions.
- SHARE** Students act out the scene with chosen song cued by the stage manager in the group.
- DISCUSS** Talk about the song choice you made with the class, backing up the choice with your vision and the playwright's intentions outlined in the scene's stage directions.
- .....

## HOW DO ARTISTS CREATE MAPS AND CHARACTER SKETCHES TO UNDERSTAND A SMALL TOWN?

(Common Core Code: CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7)

*Bobbie Clearly* focuses on a small, rural community in Nebraska. Students will explore aspects of small town life by creating their own maps and descriptions of key community members in their town, and analyze small town living,

- PREPARE** Read "Life In Small Town Nebraska" (page 6) and analyze the Infographic on page 7. Brainstorm the differences between small towns and their own communities. You may also wish to show some pictures of small, rural towns in Nebraska.
- DESIGN** Provide students with the template [HERE](#) or allow them to draw their own map. Based on their understanding of what businesses and services a small town might have, students design their own town center on the map. Use the Infographic as a guideline for the quantity and types of organizations, and help students understand what is NOT likely to be found in a small town (i.e. big box stores, non-Christian denominations, etc.) Next, have students create 5 community members who might live in this town, using the character sketches on the template.
- SHARE** Post the maps up and create a gallery walk for students to consider each other's town maps and characters.
- REFLECT** Would they want to live in this town? Why or why not? What do large cities have that are missing from small towns? What do small towns have that large cities are missing?

# POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

## HOW DOES A COMMUNITY DEFINE JUSTICE?

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

In *Bobbie Clearly*, citizens of Milton, Nebraska, struggle to deal with a criminal's reintegration into the community. In this process drama activity, students explore how a parallel situation might play out in the classroom.

- DEFINE** Ask the class to define the terms *justice*, *punishment*, and *revenge*. Share out a few definitions of each term.
- BRAINSTORM** Ask students to imagine the following scenario (or a similar scenario): A member of this class stole the classroom's laptop. This laptop contained important work for each member of the class. The classmate then destroyed the laptop, making the work unrecoverable, and was caught, suspended, and has rejoined the class. Has justice been served, or is something missing? Ask students to write down what they think they should do as a classroom community in this situation, specifically with regard to the offender.
- DEBATE** Create a list of ideas on the board, combining similar ideas. Choose two strong ideas and host a human-barometer style debate in which undecided students move across the room to the side with the most compelling argument about why their suggestion creates justice.
- REFLECT** In what ways were your responses to a returning offender similar to the characters' responses to Bobbie?
- .....

## HOW DOES A PLAYWRIGHT USE AN INTERVIEW TO INSPIRE A FICTIONAL MONOLOGUE?

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

Playwright Alex Lubischer used interviews with family and friends from his hometown to inspire the entirely fictional characters in *Bobbie Clearly*. In this activity, students explore how to find inspiration through interview.

- INSPIRE** Have students sit in a circle. Go around the circle, having each student introduce something about themselves by finishing the sentence, "I'm the one who..." For example, a student might say, "I'm the one who has seven siblings." Go around the circle several times, and ask students to take note of which sentences intrigue them.
- PLAN** Have students plan an interview with a classmate, using the Interview Template [HERE](#). Students should write out three to four questions for their interview subject, questions inspired by their "I'm the one who..." statements.
- INTERVIEW** If needed, model an interview for the class, using the Interview Template as a guide. Then, allow students to interview each other, taking notes of answers.
- WRITE** Using their interviews as a starting point, have students write monologues inspired by their classmates, but fictional.
- SHARE** Have students read monologues out loud in small groups or as a whole class. What was difficult about conducting an interview? How did the interview as a basis change how or what you wrote?

# RESOURCES

**CCD:** Commonly referred to as CCD or Catechism, Confraternity of Christian Doctrine provides religious education to Catholic children attending secular schools. CCD education is provided by both members of the clergy and lay staff  
*Darla says she taught both Eddie and Bobbie at CCD.*

**BIG BROTHER PROGRAMS** The programs called Big Brothers Big Sisters of America pair younger children and teens with older adult role models  
*Derek refers to Bobbie as his Little Brother but wishes he were his actual little brother.*

**PROBATION** The release of an offender from detention, subject to a period of good behavior under supervision  
*Darla says Bobbie got a pretty easy sentence for his first crime of vandalism, getting released with probation and community service.*

**VENTRILOQUISM** An act of stagecraft in which a person (a ventriloquist) changes his or her voice so that it appears that the voice is coming from elsewhere, usually a puppeteered "dummy"  
*Mitch and Pete comment on Gus Wagner's puppet routine at the first talent show. Bobbie also performs a ventriloquist act in the talent show.*

**JURISDICTION** The right, power, or authority to administer justice by hearing and determining controversies  
*When Bobbie calls Darla about the crime he committed, she drives to where he is even though the area and case are out of her jurisdiction.*

**ADVENT** a season observed in many Christian churches as a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the Nativity of Jesus at Christmas, as well as the return of Jesus at the second coming  
*With Christmas and Advent coming up, Darla thinks a lot about Bobbie and wonders if she should send him a Christmas card.*

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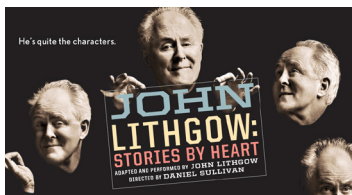
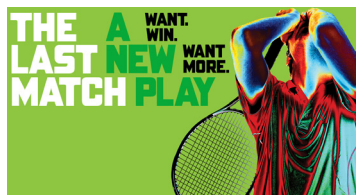


# ABOUT ROUNDABOUT

## ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

Roundabout Theatre Company (Todd Haimes, Artistic Director/CEO) 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](http://roundabouttheatre.org).

## 2017-2018 SEASON



## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: INTERVIEW WITH NICOLE TINGIR, MANAGER OF PLAY DEVELOPMENT

**Ted Sod: Tell us about yourself. Where were you born and educated? How and when did you become the Artistic department's Manager of Play Development?**

**Nicole Tingir:** I'm from Long Island, originally—Port Washington, NY. After graduating from Georgetown University in DC, where I studied biology/pre-med, I spent two years working in healthcare consulting. When I decided to make the switch into theatre, I spent a long time researching the industry, the key players, and the different career paths. I interned at Atlantic Theater Company and Manhattan Theatre Club before starting at Roundabout in 2010. For my first few years I worked with our Executive Director Julia Levy, and in that capacity I worked with our Board of Directors and managed our government relations strategy. Artistic departments tend to be small, and there is often not much movement, personnel-wise. A few years into my time at Roundabout, the opportunity arose, and our Director of New Play Development, Jill Rafson, and I crafted the position that eventually became the Manager of Play Development.

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

**NT:** New play development has really grown at Roundabout, particularly in the past 5-6 years. We realized that it was becoming necessary to have someone dedicated to producing all of the readings and workshops we do throughout the year—close to 30 of them, on average! While that's my main focus, because we're a small department, we all do a bit of everything to aid

our department's overall goal of programming the season and developing our shows so that they're ready for the stage. That means there's a bunch of script-reading, meeting artists, and keeping tabs on what's happening around the city and at other theatres.

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

**NT:** The best part is the fact that each day, and each project, is a bit different. Each project brings its own set of challenges and needs, and it's fun to continually discover the different ways to successfully produce a reading. On the artistic side, it's the moment before you begin to read a new play. The excitement that you might be about to discover your new favorite piece is a feeling that doesn't get old. That also ties into the hardest part—there are so many plays out there looking for a home, but there are unfortunately only a limited number of slots available in our season, or on our developmental slate.

**TS: Why do you choose to work at Roundabout?**

**NT:** What I love about Roundabout is the variety and the scope of the work we do. There aren't many places where you can work on the world premiere of an emerging playwright's new play in a 62-seat black box theatre, while also working on the Broadway revival of a landmark musical. That, combined with Roundabout's focus on education and continual investment in our artists, is why I choose to work at Roundabout. •

Learn more at [roundabouttheatre.org](http://roundabouttheatre.org). Find us on:



# WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE

FOR  
EDUCATORS

## 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.

SHOW  
TITLE

PERFORMANCE  
DATE & TIME

THEATRE NAME  
& LOCATION

PRICE



Major support for *Bobbie Clearly* and Roundabout Underground is provided by Jodi Glucksman.

Alex Lubischer is Roundabout's 2017-18 Tow Foundation Playwright in Residence.

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 Kempner.

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