

ABIGAIL'S PARTY

BY MIKE LEIGH



MTC

MELBOURNE
THEATRE
COMPANY

Welcome



In 1977 Mike Leigh set a new standard for audacious domestic satire with *Abigail's Party*, and forty years on it remains a fiercely sharp portrait of middle class aspirations.

This iconic play arrives at Melbourne Theatre Company for the first time in a revival full of energy, boldness and humour, along with the subtle darkness ever-present in Leigh's writing.

This production also marks the MTC mainstage debut of director Stephen Nicolazzo, after previously working with the Company as part of our 2014 NEON Festival of Independent Theatre, and as an Assistant Director on *Double Indemnity* and *Di and Viv and Rose*.

It is always a proud moment when an alumnus of MTC programs and initiatives returns to the Company in a new capacity. Through all our artist access initiatives we seek to create pathways leading to future work opportunities and collaboration across the sector. In 2018, our many popular initiatives including our Women in Theatre and Indigenous Scholarship Programs, MTC Ambassadors, Cybec Electric play readings and Assistant Director positions will continue to open doors for dozens more theatre professionals and students pursuing work in creative industries.

With some of Australia's most exciting theatre makers as your hosts this evening, sit back and get comfortably uncomfortable at *Abigail's Party*.

Brett Sheehy AO
Artistic Director

Virginia Lovett
Executive Director

Melbourne Theatre Company acknowledges the Yalukit Willam Peoples of the Boon Wurrung, the Traditional Owners of the land on which Southbank Theatre and MTC HQ stand, and we pay our respects to Melbourne's First Peoples, to their ancestors past and present, and to our shared future.

MTC is a department of the University of Melbourne.



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MTC is a member of Live Performance Australia and the Australian Major Performing Arts Group.



MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

ABIGAIL'S PARTY

BY MIKE LEIGH

17 MARCH – 21 APRIL, 2018

Southbank Theatre, The Sumner

— About the play —

Desperate to impress, Beverly has invited her neighbours around for a decadent evening of cheese and pineapple sticks. But after copious amounts of alcohol, the party quickly descends into a night of social awkwardness, outrageous flirting and hilarious putdowns.

— Cast —

Angela Cooper Zoe Boesen
Beverly Moss Pip Edwards
Laurence Moss Daniel Frederiksen
Tony Cooper Benjamin Rigby
Susan Lawson Katherine Tonkin

— Creative Team —

Director Stephen Nicolazzo
Set Designer Anna Cordingley
Lighting Designer Katie Sfetkidis
Costume Designer Eugyeene Teh
Composer & Sound Designer Daniel Nixon
Voice & Dialect Coach Geraldine Cook-Dafner
Stage Manager Pippa Wright
Assistant Stage Manager Benjamin Cooper
Directorial Secondment Lynda Fleming
Sound Secondment Justin Gardam
Rehearsal Photographer Deryk McAlpin
Production Photographer Jeff Busby

For information regarding the running time, please see a member of the Front of House team.

Cover photo: Justin Ridler

Opening Night Partner

 Abercrombie & Kent

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The done thing.

Four decades on, playwright Mike Leigh tells us the story behind his iconic play, *Abigail's Party*.

'It isn't the done thing!' This neurotic mantra echoed mercilessly throughout my suburban childhood and teenage years. My parents were obsessed by it, as were so many well-meaning but misguided mums and dads of the stultifying post-war years. Of course, what we were unable to understand or consider at the time was the brutal chaos and insecurity World War II had inflicted on their lives. They'd been to hell and back, and now they hung on relentlessly to an idea of an unshakeable order and material respectability. Behave! Conform! Don't step out of line! Wear a tie! Use Brylcreem! And of course, we war babies, who were the repressed teenagers of the 1950s, became the generation of boys and girls who literally let our hair down in the so-called 'swinging' Sixties.

But The Done Thing didn't go away. By the late Seventies that tame aspiration of the 1950s to 'Keep Up With The Joneses' had given way to an aggressive consumerism of a new and much uglier and more cynical strain. People hadn't been inherently selfish in those post-war years. But now, many were becoming so. Enter Margaret Thatcher.

From time to time it has been suggested that *Abigail's Party* is, or was, a 'state-of-the-nation' play. Maybe it could be called one; it's not for me to say. Certainly, if I'd set out deliberately to create such a work in 1977, which happened to be two years before Thatcher came to power, I'd have failed miserably. Instead the play came from my intuitive sense of the spirit and the

flavour of the times (the pretentious here might invoke the *Zeitgeist*), and from a growing personal fear of, and frustration with, the suburban existence.

Having, as best as I could, thrown off my suburban and provincial shackles at the tender age of 17, I'd enjoyed a healthy decade-and-a-half or so of a relatively alternative and bohemian metropolitan existence. But now Alison Steadman and I had married, moved to a North London suburb, burdened ourselves with a mortgage, bought a semi-detached house (albeit a pleasant Victorian one), and were busy acquiring all the usual goods and chattels respectable *Guardian*-reading types acquired.

Although we two were hardly Beverly and Laurence, through this new kind of existence, involving values and people I was now having to be a part of, I inevitably felt, if subconsciously, that I had somehow taken a step backwards, into the dreaded world of The Done Thing.

In fact, all my plays and films have, at one level or another, dealt with the tension between conforming or being your true self, between following the rules or breaking them, and with the problem of having to behave the way you think you're expected to.

Anarchy versus respectability haunts *Bleak Moments*; *Nuts in May* pitches the hypocritical moral high ground ►



*Katherine Tonkin, Pip Edwards, Zoe Boesen
(obscured), Daniel Frederiksen and
Benjamin Rigby in rehearsal*

Katherine Tonkin, Pip Edwards
and Zoe Boesen in rehearsal



against honest unpretentiousness; and *Meantime* and *High Hopes* both deal with intelligent young outsiders confronting those safe suburban values. The central protagonists of *Naked* and *Happy-Go-Lucky* are both questioning and anarchic, but whereas Johnny is burnt up with inward-looking frustration, Poppy is an optimist, who knows how to channel her feelings positively and responsibly. And the tragedy of *Another Year* is Mary's horror of middle age, and the growing realisation that she can no longer live up to her received image of how to be gorgeous for men.

Consider even my period films. *Topsy-Turvy* is fundamentally about the pain behind the mask, while the eponymous Vera Drake is a very respectable woman, motivated by the highest of morals to break the law. And J.M.W. Turner was the ultimate outsider's insider, part of the Establishment, yet breaking all the rules in the book.

Although *Abigail's Party* was by no means my first work (it was in fact the twenty-fourth), it does perhaps earn the status of being the mother of all my studies of The Done Thing.

Beverly is an aspirational working-class girl who is totally preoccupied with appearances and received notions of behaviour and taste. A bundle of contradictions, she espouses the idea of people freely enjoying themselves, yet endlessly bullies everybody into doing what she wrongly thinks they'll enjoy, or what is good for them. But, whilst she may be perceived as monstrous, she is in fact vulnerable, insecure and sad.

Is Laurence from a working-class or lower middle-class background? If you met him, you might not guess, but I'd suggest it was the former. Now he and his prize-catch wife are on the way up, materially successful (with a struggle), sexually and spiritually unfulfilled, and at odds about pretty much

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It is a tragi-comedy. For me personally it is very
much a play about 'us', not 'them.'***

everything. He yearns for the highbrow, but she just wants a good time – and goods.

Angela and Tony, both also working-class, are essentially honest and unpretentious. Both have respectable jobs. But will they in time fall prey to The Done Thing? At the moment, they're having that classic of tough times with their new house, the mortgage, acquiring their stuff and the rest of it, and they are inevitably a touch out of their depth in their new neighbourly roles.

Shyness and self-consciousness are responsible for Tony's aggression, and underneath Angela's apparent silliness is the tough, practical reliability of an experienced working nurse. One knows that before long they will become responsible loving parents, unlike Beverly and Laurence, who are locked into their loveless battle forever – or would be, if Laurence were not doomed to his sudden and untimely end.

The successful parent is Sue. Or is she? Her eponymous daughter is the crusading descendant of all us rebellious teenagers. Yet Sue, middle-class, genuinely honest, but fearfully polite, has seen better times, does not want to be at Beverly's cosy get-together, and is battling bravely.

In his infamous review for the *Sunday Times*, Dennis Potter accused *Abigail's Party* of being 'based on nothing more edifying than rancid disdain, for it is a

prolonged jeer, twitching with genuine hatred, about the dreadful suburban tastes of the dreadful lower middle classes'.

It goes without saying that this deeply offensive rant reveals Potter not only as understanding neither the play nor its world, but also of having no sense of humour – which is to say, no sense of humanity. For *Abigail's Party* goes beyond being a comedy: it is a tragi-comedy. For me personally, it is very much a play about 'us', not 'them'. It is obviously sympathetic to all the characters, whatever their foibles, not least Beverly. And if it works – and the general consensus would appear to suggest that it does – it does so precisely because you, the audience, experience them in a real, three-dimensional way. These are ►



Katherine Tonkin

people that we recognize and understand. The play is a lamentation, not a sneer.

Returning to my own feeling about suburbia, I feel obliged to confess to a whole other matter. Look again at my films, and in many of them you might detect what, I have to admit, is undoubtedly a deep-seated nostalgia for quiet Saturday afternoons, silent back gardens, cars parked in empty streets, even twitching lace curtains. In the end, our native world is in our bones, like it or not – and, in truth, I do. (And I don't!)

Early in 1977, I was planning a BBC *Play for Today* with the producer Margaret Matheson. (In due course, this would be *Who's Who*.) Out of the blue, I was invited to have lunch with Michael Rudman, the Artistic Director of the Hampstead Theatre in North London, and his General Manager, David Aukin.

But I didn't want to meet them. I was preoccupied, not only with the film, but with doing up the house, as Alison and I had decided to try for our first baby. Besides, I wasn't interested in making another theatre piece – I was now committed to film.

**'It'll just be a stopgap.
It'll sink without trace.
Then we'll be able to
concentrate on the things
that matter.'**

Nevertheless, I went. Apart from anything else, I am always on for a lunch, and this was to be in an excellent Chinese joint in Belsize Park. Michael and David are great guys, whom I hadn't met much previously, and we all hit it off immediately. They explained that they had a problem. They'd had a successful run of shows, so had accumulated an unprecedented surplus. But under the rules, if a theatre made such a profit, they were obliged to give it back to the public funder, the Arts Council of Great Britain.

So would I like to help them spend the money by doing one of my 'improvised' plays? They could offer me ten weeks' rehearsal and a cast of up to five, the only proviso being that I had to say yes or no, here and now, before I left the restaurant.

I told them emphatically that it was quite out of the question. I was busy, and that was that. But these were persuasive men, and, course by Chinese course, they wore me down, and finally I agreed.

I went home. I'll do it and get it out of the way, I told Alison. It'll just be a stopgap. It'll sink without trace. Then we'll be able to concentrate on the things that matter.

Then I suggested that Alison be in it. She hesitated. She really wanted to devote time to domesticity. But as it was to be a quick, forgettable job, she relented.

So we set about making the play. As usual with my work, it would be constructed from scratch in the rehearsals, through improvisation, discussion and research. Nobody knew what it would be, or what it



would be about, but it would open on a certain date, and we would be left alone to get on with it, with no interference from Rudman and Aukin. They were very clear about this, and they were as good as their word.

But they did say one other thing. They pointed out that productions did regularly transfer from Hampstead to the West End, and it would be great to have a show that could achieve that. I took this completely on board; I decided to subvert the traditional French-windows, cigarette-smoking 'boulevard' comedy, but instead of the comfortable happy resolution characteristic of such pieces, things would somehow go horribly wrong.

Alison and I were joined by our old friend Tim Stern, who had been a student with her

at East 15 Acting School, and had recently played his cockney spiv version of the Cat in my *Dick Whittington* at the Royal Court Theatre. I had just seen the great Janine Duvitski being brilliant in a television drama, and John Salthouse usefully brought along his early experiences as a Crystal Palace junior.

Our fifth collaborator was Thelma Whitely, who had lately and impressively played a doctor in Trevor Griffith's television play *Through the Night*, in which Alison had scored a success as the central character, a young mastectomy patient, caused severe distress by insensitive hospital treatment. The set designer was Tanya McAllin, and Lindy Hemming designed the costumes, beginning her and my long-term collaboration. This culminated in her winning the Oscar for *Topsy-Turvy*. ►



*Benjamin Rigby, Daniel Frederiksen,
Katherine Tonkin, Pip Edwards and Zoe Boesen
with Director Stephen Nicolazzo*

Daniel Frederiksen and Pip Edwards



'Immediately after its double run at Hampstead, *Abigail's Party* was wheeled into the TV Studios at White City, lock, stock and barrel.'

During the preparation, Alison observed a woman rather aggressively demonstrating cosmetics at Selfridges – the source of the lipstick scene. And she and Tim visited The Ideal Home Exhibition in character. All went well until Tim was persuaded to fill up a questionnaire by a man flogging mortgages. When he was asked his occupation, he realised he was perpetrating a howler: as an estate agent, Laurence would simply have walked away at the outset.

Janine visited a couple of hospitals, and John learned about computers. Then, late in rehearsals, Jonathan Miller, theatre director and doctor, was brought in to check out the heart attack. Curiously, and not at all usefully, he delivered a superfluous lecture on stage heart attacks and Chekhov, and told us that nobody drops dead so instantly from a cardiac arrest. (Not only is this not true, but Alison had seen a man die precisely thus at Euston Station only a few weeks earlier.)

Abigail's Party opened on 18 April 1977. It was a smash hit, the hottest ticket in town. So successful was it that Rudman and Aukin decided to revive it later in the year, over the summer. Again, it was a sell-out. Now no less than seven West End managements wanted to transfer it.

But we had hit a snag. The nuisance was Alison's and my other successful project. She was pregnant. No way could she do a

West End run, and naturally I wouldn't contemplate her being replaced. Our doctor said she could do four weeks, no more. But this was plainly no use to a commercial producer.

This seemingly intractable situation was suddenly solved by the inspired Margaret Matheson. On seeing the play, she simply said, 'Let's do it on television.' A drama she was producing about Northern Ireland had just been cancelled 'for political reasons', and she had an empty studio slot.

Initially resistant to this good idea, being rather stupidly purist about theatre and television being quite different things, I was soon persuaded by just about everybody that it would be for the best.

And so, immediately after its double run at Hampstead, *Abigail's Party* was wheeled into the TV Studios at White City, lock, stock and barrel – or nearly. For byzantine copyright reasons, the BBC insisted I change some of the live music integral to the action. Thus Elvis was replaced by Tom Jones, and José Feliciano by Demis Roussos.

This was of course a colossal compromise. Tom Jones just isn't the same thing as Elvis Presley. (He, incidentally, died during the Hampstead run, resulting in our having to rewrite the references to him.) But, replacement though he was, Demis Roussos became, after the television broadcast, ►



‘Sixteen million viewers stayed at home and watched *Abigail’s Party*.’

so inextricably associated with the play that I now allow stage revivals to feature him. (If you’re doing so, replace Laurence’s ‘that blind Spaniard’ with ‘that fat Greek’).

It was a great success on television. There were heated exchanges in the letter columns about whether you should or shouldn’t put Beaujolais in the fridge, and as to whether Alison was pregnant.

The show was screened again, and yet again, always on BBC 1. In those days there were only three television channels in the

UK, and this third transmission coincided with an all-out strike on ITV, the commercial channel, and with an esoteric, highbrow programme on BBC 2. Moreover, tempestuous storms raged throughout the British Isles that evening. So sixteen million viewers stayed at home and watched *Abigail’s Party*.

While it is gratifying that this unexpected exposure resulted in the play becoming celebrated as a classic 1970s television programme, it is equally satisfying that it has enjoyed a healthy life as a much-performed stage play.

There have been literally thousands of productions around the world, professional and amateur. It was voted No. 66 in the National Theatre’s Poll of the Best 100 Plays of the Twentieth Century; and at the time of writing, there are successful productions running in Paris, New York and Sao Paulo, with a major revival being planned for the West End.

Forty years on, I reflect on this unintended ‘stopgap’, in which I had no interest, and which I was sure would sink without trace. Had I pondered it longer and more seriously, I might perhaps have attempted that ‘state-of-the-nation’ play. But good fortune intervened, and the world was mercifully saved from that unquestionably dreadful fate. ■



Hear more from playwright Mike Leigh in our MTC Talks podcast series. mtc.com.au/MTCTalks

Cast & Creative Team



ZOE BOESEN

Angela Cooper

Zoe Boesen completed a Bachelor of Dramatic Art at the Victorian College of the Arts in 2010 and a Bachelor of Performing Arts at Monash University in 2003. Zoe appeared in *Dangerous Liaisons* (Little Ones Theatre) as part of Melbourne Theatre Company's NEON Festival of Independent Theatre. Zoe's theatre credits include *PLAYlist 2017* (Red Stitch); *The Moors* (Red Stitch); *My Romantic History* (Red Stitch), *Salomé* (Little Ones Theatre/Malthouse Theatre – Helium); *Lord of the Flies* (US-A-UM/Malthouse Theatre – Helium); *Dracula* (Little Ones Theatre); *Psycho Beach Party* (Little Ones Theatre); *Breaking* (She Said); *sex.violence.blood.gore* (MKA) and *After All This* (Elbow Room). Zoe's television credits include *Sisters* (Network 10); *Time of Our Lives* (ABC TV); *Offspring* (Network 10); *Hamish and Andy* (7 Network LTD) and *Real Stories* (Network 10). Her feature film credits include *That's Not Me* (Storey Kids) and *Romulus My Father* (Arena Film).



PIP EDWARDS

Beverley Moss

Pip Edwards graduated from NIDA in 2012 and the University of Melbourne (Creative Arts) in 2010. She has trained at the UCB Improvisation School in LA and in 2012 was the recipient of the 'Leslie Walford AM Award' for her work as a filmmaker. For Melbourne Theatre Company Pip previously appeared in *Ghosts*. Other theatre credits include *Cellblock Booty* (Sisters Grimm) and *Home Economics* with Stephen Nicolazzo (Little Ones Theatre). Her television credits include *Home and Away*, *Anzac Girls*, *Wonderland* and *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*. Her feature film credits include *A Few Less Men* written by Dean Craig and *Little Black Dress*. Pip is a proud member of MEAA.



DANIEL FREDERIKSEN

Laurence Moss

Logie and AFI nominated Daniel Frederiksen has had an extensive career across film, television and theatre, and most recently starred as Mr Wormwood in the critically acclaimed *Matilda the Musical*, for which he won a Helpmann Award. Daniel's other theatre credits include *After Miss Julie*, *The Pain & The Itch*, *Leaves of Glass*, *Fat Boy*, *Ruben Guthrie*, *Robot vs. Art*, *Julius Caesar* (Bell Shakespeare), *The Good Person of Szechuan* (Malthouse Theatre and The National Theatre of China co-production) and Melbourne Theatre Company productions of *Cheech*, *Don Juan in Soho*, *Rockabye*, *Betty Shaw* and *Dead Man's Cell Phone*. Daniel is a founding member of Red Stitch, Melbourne's highly regarded independent theatre company. After studying at NIDA, he first achieved recognition in the television series *Blue Heelers*, followed by a series regular role in *Stingers*, for which he was nominated for a Logie Award for Best New Talent. Other TV credits include roles in the telemovie *Underground*, *Underbelly 6* 'Squizzy Taylor', *Redfern Now*, and most recently in the ABC's *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries*.

Cast & Creative Team



BENJAMIN RIGBY

Tony Cooper

Benjamin Rigby graduated from the University of Southern Queensland with a Bachelor of Theatre Arts (Acting) in 2009. Film and television credits include *Neighbours*, *Green Eyed*, *Miss Fisher's Murder Mysteries* (ABC), *Plague* (Burning Ships productions), *The Secret River* (ABC), and most recently *That's Not Me*, Academy Award-nominated *Lion* and Ridley Scott's *Alien: Covenant*. He wrote, co-produced and starred in the short film *Bridge* which made its world premiere at Palm Springs International Shortfest in 2016. Co-founder of independent theatre company Exhibit A: Theatre, he has produced and appeared in stage productions *Sight Unseen*, *EIGHT*, *SubUrbia*, *Cowboy Mouth* and *Flesh Wound*, as well as appearing in *The House of Yes* for Little Ones Theatre, directed by Stephen Nicolazzo (Theatre Works).



KATHERINE TONKIN

Susan Lawson

Katherine Tonkin has worked with a number of Australia's leading mainstage and independent theatre companies, as well as playing to festivals both nationally and overseas. Her theatre credits include: *Three Little Words*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Apocalypse Bear Trilogy*, *Cloud Nine*, and *A Streetcar Named Desire: Explorations* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *The Histrionic* and *Baal* (Sydney Theatre Company/Malthouse Theatre); *The Wild Duck*, and *Elektra Orestes* (Belvoir); *Conversation Piece* (Lucy Guerin Inc/Belvoir); *Tame, OT: Chronicles of the Old Testament* (Malthouse Theatre); *The Eisteddfod* (Stuck Pigs Squealing/Malthouse Theatre/Brisbane Powerhouse/Downstairs Belvoir); *Gilgamesh* (Uncle Semolina & Friends/MIAF/Sydney Opera House/Barbican/Festival of Australian Theatre in China); *Smashed* (Griffin Independent); *I Heart John McEnroe* (Uninvited Guests/Theatreworks); *Duets for Lovers and Dreamers* (Insite Arts/fortyfive downstairs); and *3xSisters* (Hayloft Project). Screen credits include *The BBQ*, *Macbeth*, *Nowhere Boys* (Series 4), *The Future is Expensive*, *Winners and Losers* (Series 3 and 4), *City Homicide* (Series 3 and 4), *Neighbours*, *Blue Heelers*, *Snake Tales* and *Kick*.



MIKE LEIGH

Playwright

Mike Leigh OBE is an English writer and director of film and theatre. He studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art before honing his directing skills at East 15 Acting School, the Camberwell School of Art and the Central School of Art and Design. He began as a theatre director and playwright in the mid-1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s his career moved between theatre work and making films for BBC Television, many of which were characterised by a gritty 'kitchen sink realism' style. Some of his notable stage plays include *Smelling A Rat*, *It's A Great Big Shame*, *Greek Tragedy*, *Goose-Pimples*, *Ecstasy*, and *Abigail's Party*. His most well-known films include the comedy-dramas *Life is Sweet* and *Career Girls*, *Topsy-Turvy*, and the bleak working-class drama *All or Nothing*. His most notable films are the black comedy-drama *Naked*, the Oscar-nominated, BAFTA and Palme d'Or-winning drama *Secrets & Lies*, the Golden Lion winning working-class drama *Vera Drake*, and the Palme d'Or nominated biopic *Mr. Turner*. Mike's most recent film, *Peterloo*, will be released later in 2018.

Cast & Creative Team



STEPHEN NICOLAZZO

Director

Stephen Nicolazzo is a Melbourne based theatre director. He studied at The University of Melbourne (Creative Arts) and NIDA (Directing). Stephen is the founder of queer independent company, Little Ones Theatre, which has had critical and commercial success across the country. He has been nominated for two Green Room Awards for Best Direction and was a recipient of the Besen Family Artist Program Award through Malthouse Theatre and a Play King Australasia Award. His directing credits include *Dangerous Liaisons* (MTC NEON Festival of Independent Theatre, Brisbane Powerhouse, Darwin Festival), *Merciless Gods* (Griffin Theatre Company, Darebin Arts Speakeasy, Little Ones), *The Happy Prince* (La Mama, Midsumma Festival, Little Ones), *The Moors* (Red Stitch), *Playing to Win* (Arts Centre Melbourne), *Meme Girls* (Malthouse Theatre), *The Nightingale and the Rose* (Theatre Works, Little Ones), *Dracula* (Theatre Works, Little Ones), *Special Victim* (Adelaide Cabaret Festival), *The House of Yes* (Theatre Works) and *Salomé* (Malthouse Theatre).



ANNA CORDINGLEY

Set Designer

Anna Cordingley is an award-winning set and costume designer for theatre, opera and dance whose designs have been seen by audiences throughout Australia, Europe, Britain and the United States. She also designs exhibitions and events and creates public art and installations. Theatre designs include *Jasper Jones*, *Death and the Maiden* (MTC); *Richard III*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Tartuffe*, *Phèdre*, *Macbeth*, *Julius Caesar* (Bell Shakespeare); *Masquerade* (Griffin Theatre Company/STCSA); and for Malthouse Theatre, *Meow Meow's Little Mermaid*, *Meow Meow's Little Match Girl*, *The Bloody Chamber*, *A Golem Story* and *Happy Days* (with Belvoir). Opera designs include *Aida* (Opera Australia), *Sunday in the park with George* (Victorian Opera), *The Threepenny Opera* (VO/STC/Malthouse Theatre); and *Richter/Meinhof Opera* (Melbourne Festival). Designs for dance include, *An Act Of Now*, *Connected* (Chunky Move), and *Human Interest Story* (Lucy Guerin Inc.). Anna won a Helpmann Award for Best Set Design in 2017 and two Green Room Awards for Best Design. Anna is a lecturer in design at the University of Melbourne (VCA) and design akademie Berlin.



EUGYEENE TEH

Costume Designer

Eugyeene Teh is a designer across multiple artforms. Recent design credits include *Endgame* and *Straight White Men* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Blaque Showgirls*, *Meme Girls*, *A Social Service* and *Approximate Translation* (Malthouse Theatre). As a co-artistic director of Little Ones Theatre, his many designs include *The Happy Prince*, *Merciless Gods* (with Griffin Theatre Company); *Dracula*, *Dangerous Liaisons* (with MTC NEON Festival); *Salomé* (with Malthouse Helium); *Psycho Beach Party* and *The House of Yes*. As resident designer for MKA, his designs include *The Trouble with Harry*, *The Unspoken Word is 'Joe'* (Griffin Theatre Company); *Triangle* and *sex. violence.blood.gore*. Other recent credits include Melbourne Festival's *Lady Eats Apple* (Back to Back); *Book of Exodus Part II* (Fraught Outfit); *Exil* and *The Howling Girls* (Sydney Chamber Opera); *In Between Two* for Sydney and Melbourne Festivals, *The Moors* (Red Stitch); and *Coloured Aliens* (La Mama). Eugyeene has been nominated for seven Green Room Awards and recently received the Keith and Elisabeth Murdoch Travelling Fellowship.

Cast & Creative Team



KATIE SFETKIDIS

Lighting Designer

Katie Sfetkidis is a Melbourne based lighting designer and co-artistic director of Little Ones Theatre. She has worked across both mainstage and independent theatre in Melbourne and Sydney. Credits include: *Happy Ending* (Melbourne Theatre Company); *Meme Girls* (Malthouse Theatre); *Kill the Messenger* (Belvoir); *Calpurnia Descending* (Sydney Theatre Company/Malthouse Theatre); *Merciless Gods*, *Dracula* and *Dangerous Liaisons* (Little Ones Theatre); *An Act of God* (Darlinghurst Theatre Company); *The Moors* (Red Stitch); *Oh Mensch* (Sydney Chamber Opera); *Summertime in the Garden of Eden* and *The Sovereign Wife* (Sisters Grimm). Katie is the recipient of a 2015 Green Room Award for Lighting Design (companies) for her work on *Meme Girls*.



DANIEL NIXON

Composer & Sound Designer

Daniel Nixon is a composer, sound designer and multi-instrumentalist. He has performed with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Victoria, John Farnham, Yothu Yindi, Sebina Meyer, Mikko Frank and many others. He has written and recorded multiple albums and worked extensively as a session player and programmer. He has scored and designed numerous films, games, ads and plays including work for Melbourne Theatre Company, Flashgun Films, Cascade Films, Little Ones Theatre, Red Stitch, American Girl, Universal Television, Disney Pictures, Queensland Theatre, Dirty Pretty Theatre, Griffin Theatre Company, Ensemble Theatre, Madman Entertainment, NBCU, ABC, Netflix, Farmhand films, and many others.



GERALDINE COOK-DAFNER

Voice and Dialect Coach

Geraldine Cook-Dafner previously worked for Melbourne Theatre Company on *The Children*, *Hay Fever*, *Di and Viv* and *Rose*, *Melbourne Talam*, *John*, *The Odd Couple*, *Straight White Men*, *The Distance*, *Birdland*, *The Waiting Room*, *Top Girls*, *The Heretic*, *The Swimming Club*, *The 39 Steps*, *The History Boys*, *All My Sons*, *The Clean House*, *Boy Gets Girl*, *Take Me Out*, and *The Glass Menagerie*. Geraldine also works for independent theatre companies Red Stitch and Hit Productions. She trained at Middlesex University, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and she is an Honorary Senior Fellow in the theatre department at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne. Geraldine also works as a voice consultant in film, ABC Radio, SBS Radio, and for local corporate and government bodies. Geraldine was previously Head of Voice, Head of School of Performing Arts and an Associate Dean at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne.

GO BEHIND THE SCENES OF *ABIGAIL'S PARTY*



Hear director **Stephen Nicolazzo** discuss his love for Mike Leigh's play in our MTC Talks podcast series.



Watch actor **Katherine Tonkin** and director **Stephen Nicolazzo** discuss the revival of *Abigail's Party* at our season launch.



Meet the cast of *Abigail's Party* and learn about the actors portraying **Beverly, Laurence, Sue, Tony** and **Angela**.



Watch costume designer **Eugene Teh's** design process from sketch to stage.

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