

# ABIGAIL'S PARTY

BY MIKE LEIGH



## Education Mini-Pack

17 MARCH – 21 APRIL

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.

### About the 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

**Angela Cooper** Zoe Boesen

**Beverly Moss** Pip Edwards

**Laurence Moss** Daniel Frederiksen

**Tony Cooper** Benjamin Rigby

**Susan Lawson** Katherine Tonkin

### Production

**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

### Genre

Satirical comedy

### Running Time

Approximately 100min without interval

### Attendance Information

Contains mild coarse language, mild sexual references and use of herbal cigarettes and cigars. For detailed information, please visit [www.mtc.com.au/production-content-guide](http://www.mtc.com.au/production-content-guide)



Turn the page for activities, and discussions.

## Before the show



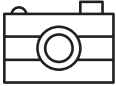
*Abigail's Party* is a suburban situation comedy of manners, and could be likened to *Kath & Kim*. Both are satires on the aspirations and tastes of the middle class, however *Abigail's Party* is set in 1970s Britain. Discuss what kind of dialogue and humour you might expect to see, and research what was happening in Britain during this decade.

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Read the play synopsis overleaf, then watch the trailer for *Abigail's Party* at [youtube.com/melbtheatreco](https://www.youtube.com/melbtheatreco). Make a list of predictions about what you might see on stage.

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Look at the rehearsal photo gallery and discuss what the rehearsal process entailed. Which elements of the set, props and costumes were used in rehearsal? To see the galleries, visit [mtc.com.au/backstage](https://mtc.com.au/backstage)

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Mike Leigh says all his play have 'dealt with the tension between conforming or being your true self, between following the rules or breaking them'. Hear more from the playwright in our MTC Talks podcast series at [mtc.com.au/MTCTalks](https://mtc.com.au/MTCTalks)

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## Post-show Activities



What do you think happened while Laurence and Tony were offstage checking in on Abigail's party next-door? Write a scene in the same style as Mike Leigh's play.

Discuss the props you saw on stage, particularly the food and drink. Although the characters in *Abigail's Party* appear to get drunk, the actors are not drinking alcohol. To find out what they might be drinking instead, visit [mtc.com.au/backstage](https://mtc.com.au/backstage)

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Discuss how Stephen Nicolazzo directed the actors on the split-level set. Listen to director Stephen Nicolazzo discuss his love for Mike Leigh's play in our MTC Talks podcast series at [mtc.com.au/MTCTalks](https://mtc.com.au/MTCTalks)

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Which costume was your favourite? What gives it a specially 'seventies' look? Watch costume designer Eugyeene Teh's design process from sketch to stage at [mtc.com.au/backstage](https://mtc.com.au/backstage)

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Discuss the play's final moments, when Laurence suffers a fatal heart attack. What did Angela do and why? How did Beverly react and why?

Mike Leigh says *Abigail's Party* was 'constructed from scratch in the rehearsals, through improvisation, discussion and research.' Discuss the play-making techniques used for the original production.

How do you think Susan's vomit effect was created? Hint: creamed corn was involved.

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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.



@melbtheatreco #mtcAbigailsParty



MTC Education

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