



JOHN

by Annie Baker

Education Mini-Pack

10 FEBRUARY – 25 MARCH

Arts Centre Melbourne, Fairfax Studio

About the Play

Jenny and Elias arrive late one evening at a kitschy, civil war-themed B&B in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Awkward and harried, they are a couple on the edge. It's a feeling exacerbated by the sensation they're being watched. Not just by Mertis and her eccentric friend Genevieve, but by the countless dolls and figurines that occupy their spooky lodgings. This might not be the right place, or the right company, for Jenny and Elias to mend their fraying relationship.

About the Playwright

"I am an incredibly self-conscious person. Hyperobservant and self-examining. Writing takes me out of my head."

— Quoted in *The Fascinator: Meet Playwright Annie Baker* by Jesse Green, elle.com

"Baker's first play, *Body Awareness*, was produced in New York when she was 27 years old. Her next two, *The Aliens* and *Circle Mirror Transformation*, split the Obie Award for Best New American Play; the latter was the second-most-produced play in America in 2010. In 2013, *The Flick...* sparked enough enraged walkouts that it became a running arts controversy. It also won the Pulitzer Prize."

— From *Least Likely* by Amos Barshad, grantland.com

Cast

Elias Schreiber-Hoffman Johnny Carr

Genevieve Marduk Melita Jurisic

Jenny Chung Ursula Mills

Mertis Katherine Graven Helen Morse

Production

Director Sarah Goodes

Set & Costume Designer Elizabeth Gadsby

Lighting Designer Richard Vabre

Composer & Sound Designer Russell Goldsmith

Voice & Dialect Coach Geraldine Cook-Dafner

Fight Choreographer Felicity Steel

Stage Manager Christine Bennett

Assistant Stage Manager Lisette Drew

Genre

Contemporary drama

Running Time

Approximately 3hrs including interval

Attendance Information

Contains coarse language, allusions to drug use, and sexual references.



Turn the page for activities, and discussions.

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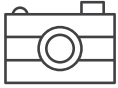
Before the show



Read Sarah Goode's (Director) notes on *John* and why it's often described as "supernatural realism" at mtc.com.au/backstage



Annie Baker (playwright) felt inspired to "push the boundaries of theatre". What are these "boundaries" and how might *John* push them? Read more about the playwright at mtc.com.au/backstage



See the *John* team prepare for the show in our rehearsal gallery at mtc.com.au/backstage

Post-show Activities



Sarah Goodes says "Composer Russell Goldsmith and I explored the 'Ken Burns effect' from watching his incredible documentary on the American Civil War". Research the Ken Burns effect and discuss its relevance to the sound design. Read more from Sarah Goodes at mtc.com.au/backstage



- Have a class discussion based on this quote from the play, and discuss the symbolism of the dolls.

MERTIS: I always thought it would be a wonderful thing to be a doll. To be... To be free of responsibility. To be able to provide joy to people without even moving. Without even saying anything.
 - Discuss the title of the play. At what point was John's name first mentioned? What do you know about John?
 - Think about this moment in the play:

MERTIS: The Jackson can be a little temperamental. But it's fine right now. The door is there and it's unlocked and she's sleeping like a baby.

In pairs, discuss why you think the Jackson room is "temperamental".
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- Research the kinds of tourism offerings available in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. What kinds of battlefield or ghost tours exist? What can you infer about the town's relationship with the supernatural?
 - Compare and contrast *John* with *Night on Bald Mountain* by Patrick White, and *The Comfort of Strangers* novel by Ian McEwan and screenplay by Harold Pinter.
 - Write an account of the events in the play from the perspective of Samantha, the American Girl doll.
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- Think about the intimate theatre where you saw *John*, the Fairfax Studio. How did this performance space influence the set design and acting style? Watch the behind-the-scenes video at mtc.com.au/backstage

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