

APPROPRIATE

BY
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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

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ap•pro•pri•ate

- adj.* 1. suitable or fitting for a particular purpose, person, occasion, etc.
2. belonging to or peculiar to a person; proper.
- v.* 3. to set apart, authorize, or legislate for some specific purpose or use.
4. to take to or for oneself; take possession of.
5. to take without permission or consent; seize; expropriate.
6. to steal, especially to commit petty theft.

The co-world premiere of APPROPRIATE was produced at the 2013 Humana Festival of New American Plays, at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Louisville, KY, and at Victory Gardens Theater (Chay Yew, Artistic Director; Chris Mannelli, Interim Managing Director), Chicago, IL. Both productions were directed by Gary Griffin.

For Actors Theatre of Louisville:

The scenic design was by Antje Ellermann; the costume design was by Connie Furr-Solomon; the lighting design was by Matt Frey; the sound design was by Bray Poor; the dramaturgs were Amy Wegener and Janice Paran; and the production stage manager was Michael D. Domue. The cast was as follows:

TONI	Jordan Baker
RHYS	David Rosenblatt
BO	Larry Bull
RACHAEL	Amy Lynn Stewart
CASSIDY	Lilli Stein
AINSLEY	Gabe Weible
FRANZ	Reese Madigan
RIVER	Natalie Kuhn

For Victory Gardens Theater:

The scenic design was by Yu Shibigaki; the costume design was by Janice Pytel; the lighting design was by Jesse Klug; the sound design was by Chris LaPorte; the fight choreographer was Ryan Bourque; and the production stage manager was Dennis J. Conners. The cast was as follows:

TONI	Kirsten Fitzgerald
RHYS	Alex Stage
BO	Keith Kupferer
RACHAEL	Cheryl Graeff
CASSIDY	Jennifer Baker
AINSLEY	Theo Moss/Mark Page
FRANZ	Stef Tovar
RIVER	Leah Karpel

APPROPRIATE was presented by Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company (Howard Shalwitz, Artistic Director; Jeffrey Herrmann, Managing Director), opening on November 8, 2013. It was directed by Liesl Tommy. The scenic design was by Clint Ramos; the costume design was by Kathleen Geldard; the lighting design was by Colin K. Bills; the original music and sound design was by Broken Chord; the fight choreography was by Joe Isenberg; the production dramaturg was Kirsten Bowen; and the production stage manager was Kristy Matero. The cast was as follows:

TONI Deborah Hazlett
 RHYS Josh Adams
 BO David Bishins
 RACHAEL Beth Hylton
 CASSIDY Maya Brettell
 AINSLEY Cole Edelstein/Eli Schulman
 FRANZ Tim Getman
 RIVER Caitlin McColl

The New York premiere of APPROPRIATE was produced by Signature Theatre (James Houghton, Founding Artistic Director; Erika Mallin, Executive Director), opening on February 25, 2014. It was directed by Liesl Tommy. The scenic and costume design was by Clint Ramos; the lighting design was by Lap Chi Chu; the original music and sound design was by Broken Chord; the projection design was by Aaron Rhyne; the fight direction was by Rick Sordelet and Christian Kelly-Sordelet; the dialect coach was Ben Furey; and the production stage manager was Kyle Gates. The cast was as follows:

TONI Johanna Day
 RHYS Mike Faist
 BO Michael Laurence
 RACHAEL Maddie Corman
 CASSIDY Izzy Hanson-Johnston
 AINSLEY Alex Dreier
 FRANZ Patch Darragh
 RIVER Sonya Harum

The West Coast premiere of APPROPRIATE was produced by the Center Theatre Group (Michael Ritchie, Artistic Director; Stephen D. Rountree, Managing Director; Douglas C. Baker, Producing Director; Gordon Davidson, Founding Artistic Director), opening on September 23, 2015. It was directed by Eric Ting. The scenic design was by Mimi Lien; the costume design was by Laura Bauer; the lighting design was by Christopher Kuhl; the sound design was by Matt Tierney; the fight direction was by Steve Rankin; the casting was by Meg Fister; the dramaturg was Joy Meads; the CTG associate artistic director was Kelley Kirkpatrick, and the production stage manager was David S. Franklin. The cast was as follows:

TONI	Melora Hardin
RHYS	Will Tranfo
RACHAEL	Missy Yager
CASSIDY	Grace Kaufman
AINSLEY	Liam Blair Askew/Alexander James Rodriguez
FRANZ	Robert Beitzel
RIVER	Zarah Mahler

APPROPRIATE, recipient of the Sundance Institute Tennessee Williams Award, was developed, in part, at the 2011 Sundance Institute Playwrights Retreat at UCross Foundation and at the 2012 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at the Sundance Resort with the Sundance Institute / Time Warner Fellowship Program.

APPROPRIATE was developed, in part, at Vineyard Arts Project (Ashley Melone, Founder and Artistic Director).

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

ANTOINETTE “TONI” LAFAYETTE: the oldest sibling, white,
late 40s/early 50s

RHYS THURSTON: her son, white, late teens

BEAUREGARDE “BO” LAFAYETTE: the middle sibling, white,
late 40s/early 50s

RACHAEL KRAMER-LAFAYETTE: his wife, white, late 40s

CASSIDY “CASSIE” KRAMER-LAFAYETTE: their older child,
white, early teens

AINSLEY KRAMER-LAFAYETTE: their younger child, white,
a child

FRANÇOIS “FRANZ/FRANK” LAFAYETTE: the youngest sibling,
white, late 30s/early 40s

RIVER RAYNER: his fiancée, white, early 20s but looks younger

SETTING

The living room of a former plantation home in southeast Arkansas.
Summer.

A NOTE ON OVERLAPPING

A slash (/) in a character’s line denotes where the *following character’s line* should begin.

A slash (/) at the beginning of a line denotes a *complete* overlap with the *following character’s line*.

LOPAKHIN. If only my father and grandfather could rise up out of their graves, and see all that's happened — how their little Yermolai, their abused, semi-literate Yermolai, who used to run around barefoot in winter — how that same Yermolai has bought this estate, the most beautiful spot on earth. Yes, I've bought the land on which my father and grandfather were slaves, where they weren't even allowed in the kitchen.

—Anton Chekhov,
The Cherry Orchard

No “we” should be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people's pain.

—Susan Sontag,
Regarding the Pain of Others

APPROPRIATE

ACT ONE: THE BOOK OF REVELATIONS

Prologue

Light abandons us and a darkness replaces it.

Instantly, a billion cicadas begin trilling in the dense, velvety void — loudly, insistently, without pause — before hopefully, at some point, becoming the void.

The insect song fills and sweeps the theatre in pulsing pitch-black waves, over and beyond the stage — washing itself over the walls and the floors, baptizing the aisles and the seats, forcing itself into every inch of space, every nook, every pocket, hiding place, and pore until this incessant chatter is touching you.

It is touching you.

This goes on and on and on and on and on until the same thought occurs in every head:

“Is this it?”

“Is this the whole show?”

One

Then moonlight happens.

It seeps in through an upstage window and just barely reveals a large and very disorderly living room in an old plantation home somewhere in Arkansas.

A mixture of old and new furniture is scattered beneath a dead chandelier; a wall or two is lined with semi-stuffed bookshelves; others are spotted with the memories of old photographs and dusty generic oil paintings. A staircase disappears into another floor, a swinging door swings onto a dining arealkitchen, and a hallway leads to an unseen room or two, probably connected to the dining area. Through a foyer, a front door with transom windows leads out onto a porch.

As the light swells, the cicadas fade to a place just beyond us but never disappear.

Somewhere, an adult-sized figure is curled up on a couch, a quilt pulled up over its head. The figure is moving slightly: the rise and fall of its breathing.

After a moment, a man with a backpack suddenly springs up into a window far from the front door — Franz. He holds a phone flashlight in his hand. Balancing on something, he jostles with the frame for a bit before hoisting it up. As someone unseen hands him another backpack and some camping equipment — which he tosses into the house — her sleepy-sounding voice is heard.

RIVER. What is that?

FRANZ. What is what?

RIVER. That sound.

FRANZ. Cicadas.

RIVER. What?

FRANZ. They're bugs. Every thirteen years they come out of the ground and make all this noise together. I forgot all about them. *(Franz climbs through the window and, with his phone's light, immediately starts taking the place in.)*

RIVER. It's so beautiful ...

FRANZ. Uh, okay ... If you're not careful, they'll get caught in your hair, so stay away from the trees. That's where they all gather. *(Beat, as Franz tries to find a light switch before he is distracted by a scraping noise from outside. Suddenly, someone — River — shoots up into the window and tries to pull herself in, sort of in slow motion, but she doesn't quite make it, falling back down. River tries to spring up into the window, again, and, again, she doesn't make it. Eventually, Franz notices.)* Baby, what is happening?

RIVER. I'm too sleepy! Help! *(Gets help.)* How long were we on the road?

FRANZ. Twenty hours — Watch your he — ?

RIVER. *(Hits her head hard.)* OW!!!

FRANZ. *(Putting her in.)* I said, watch your head.

RIVER. *(Rubbing her head.)* Owwww — wuh!

FRANZ. *(Holding her, rubbing her head.)* Aww, come here. *(Kissing her head, eating her "booboo.")* Nom-nom-nom. *(Beat, as River takes a look around.)*

RIVER. ... This is it?

FRANZ. Yeah ... What?

RIVER. I didn't say anything! ... It's just different from what I imagined.

FRANZ. Which was what?

RIVER. I don't know — When you said "plantation," I thought more ... *Gone with the Wind*, less ... hoarding. But I love it?

FRANZ. We were supposed to turn it into a bed and breakfast.

RIVER. What happened?

FRANZ. Jesus, River, you just said it — My father was a fucking / hoarder — !

RIVER. Hey hey hey — Stop it. Stop. No anger. Let it go. *(Beat, looking around.)* So you grew up around all this?

FRANZ. Someone's actually cleaned up a bit — if you'll believe it. *(Fidgeting.)* Though I don't know how they think they're going to get rid of this place with it looking like this.

RIVER. *(Noticing, calming his fidget.)* You're nervous.

FRANZ. Yeah.

RIVER. Well, don't be because you've got me here. And, if you ever get nervous, just look for me — Besides, you have a right to be here. This is your house, too. They can't do anything with it without you. Plus you grew up here. You lived with him. And you deserve what you're asking for. You deserve it. Say, "I deserve it."

FRANZ. I deserve it.

RIVER. Good. (*Kisses him, before a creak is heard.*) What was that? (*Beat.*)

FRANZ. ... It's my dad.

RIVER. Stop!

FRANZ. I'm joking — it's an old house —

RIVER. Spirits are not a joke! You know I'm sensitive!

FRANZ. Please. You just went clomping through that cemetery with no problem.

RIVER. What cemetery?

FRANZ. (*Gesturing out a window.*) On the way up here. What did you think that was — all those stones? That little gate?

RIVER. (*Looking out the window.*) That's not a — I thought it was like a cute little patio — Stop! / Stop messing with me.

FRANZ. (*Looking out the window.*) I guess it sort of looks like a — What? It's true! The tombstones are just knocked over. See? Five generations of us are out there. That's how long this place has been in the family. (*Beat, before River hits him.*) Ow! River!

RIVER. Why did you let me do that? (*Gasp, realizing.*) I forgot my sage —!

FRANZ. Will you stop it —

RIVER. Stop what? Spirits are real and our bodies are just porous vessels of energy vulnerable and susceptible to corruption and influence and — (*Off Franz's reaction.*) Don't look at me like that! I don't know if I can sleep here —

FRANZ. River, I was just messing with you. It's an old cemetery and an old house that creaks. There are no spirits here. Trust me. I would know. You and that stupid shaman.

RIVER. My shaman is not stupid. The world is a very old place full of all kinds of things ... (*Beat.*) Your father's not out there, is he?

FRANZ. No. I think they buried him back in D.C. next to Mom ...

RIVER. Who knocked over the tombstones?

FRANZ. Probably kids from the town. (*Beat.*) Or maybe me when I was drunk. I don't remember.

RIVER. (*Re: the cemetery.*) Why didn't you tell me about this?

FRANZ. I forgot. (*Pointing out the window.*) But you see that lake there?

RIVER. Yeah...?

FRANZ. Well, through those woods alongside it is where all the slaves were buried, but you have to go looking for that. They don't have grave markers or anything ...

RIVER. Oh no ... (*Beat.*)

FRANZ. BAHHH!!!

RIVER. (*Shrieks a little, then.*) STOP! / YOU JERK!

FRANZ. / WOOOOOAAAHHHAAAHAHAHAHAHA!

RIVER. STOP, FRANZ! I SAID / STOP — ! (*Suddenly, the quilted figure on the couch springs up with a moan, freaking River and Franz out.*)

FRANZ. AHHHH / — OOOOHHH — WAHHHHHH!

RIVER. AAAAHHHH — EEEEEEE — IIIIIIIIII! (*Franz and River cling to each other. After a moment, the figure removes the quilt. It's Rhys, half-asleep. Beat, as he and Franz recognize each other through the gloom.*)

FRANZ. Rhys? Is that you?

RHYS. Uncle Frank?

FRANZ. (*Relieved.*) Oh man! Yeah, man! I almost just killed you! Holy — I haven't seen you since you were ... You look ... like a dude, dude! What are you doing here?

RHYS. (*Guarded, a little confused.*) I'm here with Mom.

FRANZ. I thought you guys weren't coming in until tomorrow?

RHYS. Mom fired the estate people, so we had to come down early to get everything ready ourselves ... What are you doing here?

FRANZ. I'm here for the auction. (*Beat.*) Why are you sleeping down here? Aren't there beds upstairs?

RHYS. Aunt Rachael needs the other bedrooms for her and Bo and their kids and they get in / today —

FRANZ. Oh, right ...

RHYS. (*Sees River.*) Does Mom know you were coming?

FRANZ. I guess not, ha ha. (*Following his gaze.*) Oh, sorry, this is —

RIVER. Hi, I'm — I'm Aunt River, I guess — / Eek!

FRANZ. You're not Aunt / Anybody. Quit it — !

RIVER. You are / so cute — (*River is interrupted by a beam of light seen scurrying down the walls at the top of the stairs, followed by Toni in her sleeping gown. She is frightened and pissed off and wielding a large flashlight, which she shines in everyone's faces.*)

APPROPRIATE

by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

WINNER OF THE 2014 OBIE AWARD FOR
BEST NEW AMERICAN PLAY

3M, 4W, 1 child

Every estranged member of the Lafayette clan has descended upon the crumbling Arkansas homestead to settle the accounts of the newly-dead patriarch. As his three adult children sort through a lifetime of hoarded mementos and junk, they collide over clutter, debt, and a contentious family history. But after a disturbing discovery surfaces among their father's possessions, the reunion takes a turn for the explosive, unleashing a series of crackling surprises and confrontations.

"... very fine, subversively original ... [Jacobs-Jenkins] honors the time-tested recipes of those who have gone before him, combining them into a crafty narrative ... But he also brings a culinary self-consciousness to the mix that makes you savor the ingredients anew, while pondering why they have dominated American theater for so long ... APPROPRIATE is piercingly clear, with carefully drawn characters who speak in crisp and fluid dialogue. [Jacobs-Jenkins] enjoys his quarrelsome characters, and he has achieved the difficult feat of making them all both unlovable and impossible not to identify with ... remarkable and devious."

—The New York Times

"... prodigiously gifted ... [Branden Jacobs-Jenkins] effortlessly and believably taps into a white family's dysfunction and infuses the script with unforced, viperish humor ... APPROPRIATE is an uncommonly deft dramatic and technical achievement."

—Entertainment Weekly

"... an exceptionally brilliant piece of writing ... gut-punchingly honest work."

—Time Out (Chicago)

"... biliously funny ... Jacobs-Jenkins [is] a witty provocateur and a dramatist on whom to keep your eye ... What distinguishes [APPROPRIATE] is the playwright's gift for drawing his characters into an escalating conflict and sustaining, with humor and craft, our curiosity about how they digest the terrible information thrown at them."

—The Washington Post

Also by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

GLORIA
AN OCTOROON
NEIGHBORS

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