

OPENING NIGHT

26 FEB - 27 MAR 2022

LEARNING RESOURCES



Belvoir presents

OPENING NIGHT

Based on the original screenplay by **John Cassavetes**

Adapted and Directed by **Carissa Licciardello**

This production of *Opening Night* opened at Belvoir St Theatre on Wednesday 2 March 2022.

RUNNING TIME

1 hour 40 minutes

Set Designer **David Fleischer**

Costume Designer **Mel Page**

Lighting Designer **Nick Schlieper**

Lighting Associate **Jasmine Rizk**

Composer & Sound Designer **Max Lyandvert**

Associate Composer **Hamed Sadeghi**

Fight Director **Tim Dashwood**

Assistant Director **Nicole Pingon**

Stage Manager **Luke McGettigan**

Assistant Stage Manager **Holly Fernanda**

With

Caitlin Burley as Nancy

Jing-Xuan Chan as Kelly

Luke Mullins as Manny

Toni Scanlan as Sarah

Leeanna Walsman as Myrtle

Matthew Zeremes as Marty

UNDERSTUDIES

Charlotte Friels as Kelly and Nancy

Anthony Harkin as Marty and Manny

Fiona Press as Sarah

Anna Samson as Myrtle

Supported by **Oranges & Sardines**

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we share our stories. We also pay our respect to the Elders past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

CONTENTS

PROGRAM

About Belvoir	4
Cast and Creative Team	5
Director & Adaptor's Note	6

TEXT

Pre-show Activity	8
-------------------	---

DESIGN

Production Elements	10
Lighting Designer's Note	11
Set Design	12
Costume Design	16

PRODUCTION

Rehearsing Opening Night	18
Post Show Discussion	20

MEDIA

Watch & Listen	23
Articles & Reviews	23
Contact Education	24



ABOUT BELVOIR

ONE BUILDING. SIX HUNDRED PEOPLE. THOUSANDS OF STORIES

When the Nimrod Theatre building in Belvoir Street, Surry Hills, was threatened with redevelopment in 1984, more than 600 people – ardent theatre lovers together with arts, entertainment and media professionals – formed a syndicate to buy the building and save this unique performance space in inner city Sydney.

Thirty years later, under Artistic Director Director and Executive Director Sue Donnelly, Belvoir engages Australia's most prominent and promising playwrights, directors, actors and designers to realise an annual season of work that is dynamic, challenging and visionary. As well as performing at home, Belvoir regularly takes to the road, touring both nationally and internationally.

BELVOIR EDUCATION

Our Education Program provides students and teachers with insights into the work of Belvoir and first hand experiences of the theatre-making process.

Belvoir Education offers student workshops, teacher professional development workshops, work experience, VET placements, archival viewings and a wealth of online resources designed to support work in the drama classroom. Our arts access programs assist schools in Regional NSW and Western Sydney to access the company's work.

Explore our education pages at www.belvoir.com.au/education

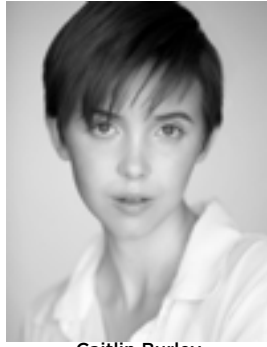
CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM



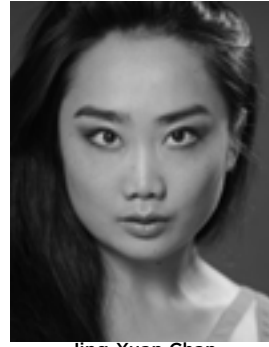
John Cassavetes
Original Screenplay



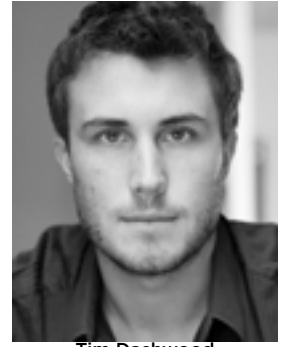
Carissa Licciardello
Director & Adaptor



Caitlin Burley
Nancy



Jing-Xuan Chan
Kelly



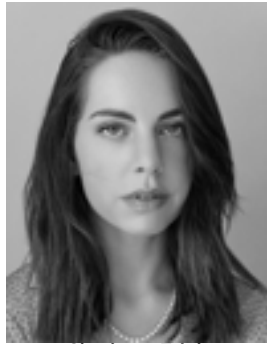
Tim Dashwood
Fight Director



Holly Fernanda
Assistant Stage Manager



David Fleischer
Set Designer



Charlotte Fries
Understudy:
Kelly and Nancy



Anthony Harkin
Understudy:
Marty and Manny



Max Lyandvert
Composer & Sound
Designer



Luke McGettigan
Stage Manager



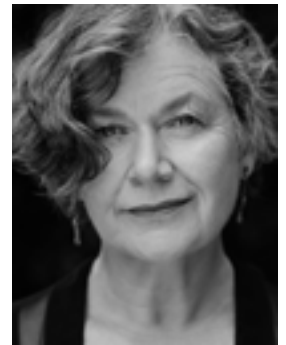
Luke Mullins
Manny



Mel Page
Costume Designer



Nicole Pingon
Assistant Director



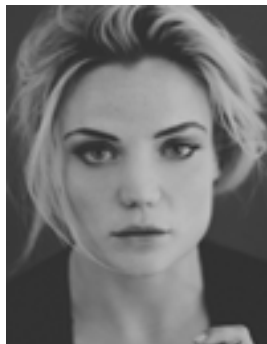
Fiona Press
Understudy:
Sarah



Jasmine Rizk
Associate Lighting Designer



Hamed Sadeghi
Associate Composer



Anna Samson
Understudy:
Myrtle



Toni Scanlan
Sarah



Nick Schlieper
Lighting Designer



Leeanna Walsman
Myrtle



Matthew Zeremes
Marty

DIRECTOR & ADAPTOR'S NOTE

CARISSA LICCIARDELLO

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA

Late last year, looking for a project to direct for the company, I gathered some thoughts on a blank sheet of paper, hoping to spark an idea. I wrote down the titles of books, films, plays that had piqued my interest, alongside a series of ideas and themes I'd long been fascinated by - plays-within-plays; theatre magic; theatre that deconstructs itself, appearing to operate in one way but soon revealing itself to be an entirely different beast; the split self, the double, the doppelganger; the idea of gender, and womanhood, as performance; the trope of the aging actress as vain or insane; the long list of female characters whose suffering or unravelling is part of the spectacle of the work; *A Streetcar Named Desire*; *Persona*; and a film I'd seen once, years ago - *Opening Night*.

All of the most interesting ideas on the page connected back to this last title - and suddenly all the theatrical, thematic and symbolic potency of *Opening Night* became clear to me. The film remains a distinctive work of art that examines what it is to age, to grapple with life and death, love and marriage; but looking at the work through fresh eyes, it seemed to also offer a remarkable vessel for what it is to be a woman in a world that has very particular expectations about how you are supposed to be and behave. A world that grants you a brief illusion of power

through youth and beauty, before gradually fading you into invisibility; a world that gaslights you, telling you how things are supposed to be even as that grates against your own experience of the world.

It is this split of realities that Myrtle, the lead actress featured in *Opening Night*, has to navigate. There's her outer world - the world of the play she's rehearsing, the world of actor, director, writer, designer - the world of culture - a world that appears to be real, but is actually constructed; and her inner world - the world as she experiences it - a world of the surreal, the metaphysical, the symbolic - a world that perhaps offers more substance.

It was the theatrical potential of these two worlds, and their ability to explore what it is to move through the world as a woman, that was the major drawcard and way in for me as an adaptor/director. And in the intimate, exposed, no-bullshit Belvoir stage, it became clear that there was a way to stage this work that didn't need cameras or screens or close-ups projected onstage - conventions one might be tempted to use in adapting a work like this - but where the play-within-a-film became a play-within-a-play. The potential for confusion between the play on the one hand, and play-within on the other,



Carissa Licciardello

would be something we could actually exploit to take us further inside Myrtle's experience - to slip between realities.

I never returned to the film; instead I began to work from the screenplay, the blueprint for Cassavetes' film, from which we created a blueprint for our own act of theatre-making. From there, I went to lighting designer Nick Schlieper and set designer Dave Fleischer, and we began to design the show at the same time as I was adapting it, each process informing the other - an ideal process for this kind of theatrical work - and the adaptation process continued as we began to work with Mel Page, costume designer, and Max Lyandvert, composer and sound designer, each of us throwing ideas around as we shaped the production. Then our cast joined us and the work continued to take shape, alongside our fight director Tim Dashwood, our excellent Assistant Director Nicole Pingon and our Associate Composer Hamed Sadeghi.

The lead-up to any *Opening Night* is always eventful - although I'm not sure if it's ever been as eventful as trying to get a show up during a pandemic. As I write this, we're about to begin Week 4 of rehearsals - but with me directing from Zoom for four days, homebound due to close-contact COVID isolation - our third COVID- related disruption so far.

Despite these challenges, this has been an exciting piece to make. We have had an excellent team

working on this show, onstage and off, and the Belvoir production team has really stretched themselves to pull this one off - it's a tricky beast. Thanks too to Alex Stuart and Lauren A. Proietti for your wisdom and work. And a big thank you to my own consiglieri, Elsie.

Here is our *Opening Night*.



Caitlin Burley, Carissa Licciardello & Leeana Walsman

PRE-SHOW ACTIVITY

SCRIPT EXCERPT FROM *OPENING NIGHT*

Based on the screenplay by John Cassavetes

Adapted by Carissa Licciardello

SCENE 1 - Myrtle and Marty perform the first dress run

He looks at her properly, taking in the full image of her.

MAURICE: You know, I really expected you to be some weathered old lady by now.

VIRGINIA: Well. Don't look too close. You'll see all my fine lines.

MAURICE: You're looking sleek.

VIRGINIA: You're not looking so bad yourself.
And it's a nice set-up you've got here. You must be doing well.

MAURICE: Well, I'm certainly not struggling, that's for sure.

VIRGINIA: Nice hotel. Swanky bachelor pad.

MAURICE: Hardly.

VIRGINIA: We used to walk past hotels like this when we were first dating. Do you remember?
We'd stay out all night and we'd walk past and laugh at the people sleeping inside,
missing all that life.

(she shivers) I'm soaked through.

MAURICE: Take your coat off. Here -

VIRGINIA: Oh - thank you -

She removes her coat, carefully revealing a short black dress. She hands him the coat.

MAURICE: Huh.

VIRGINIA: What?

MAURICE: That dress.

It's the one you used to wear, isn't it?

VIRGINIA: Oh. Yes, you're right.

MAURICE: I always thought it looked killer on you.

VIRGINIA: I can't believe you'd remember something like that. After all this time.

MAURICE: It takes me back, I suppose.

VIRGINIA: It's funny what you remember, isn't it? It makes me think of all those nights I spent
dancing, drinking, on the backs of motorcycles... It'd be riding right up my legs but I
didn't care, I'd just cling tight to whoever was driving and hang on for dear life.

I'm pretty sure that's how we first met, isn't it? You took me for a ride on your
motorbike. Do you remember?

MAURICE: I remember. You were always surrounded by men, whenever I saw you. But I wasn't
intimidated. I thought, what do any of these guys have that I don't? So I drove up on
that motorcycle and it was like the parting of the Red Sea.

Virginia laughs.

VIRGINIA: I always thought you were so... impressive.

...

I'm glad to see you Maurice.

...

Are you glad to see me?

MAURICE: It's certainly a surprise.

VIRGINIA: You said that.

MAURICE: Virginia. Let's be frank with each other. What are you doing here?

VIRGINIA: What do you mean?

MAURICE: You turn up out of the blue, talking about when we used to date, how we first met
What are you getting at?

VIRGINIA: Can't a girl visit an old lover when he's in town? For old time's sake?

MAURICE: Old time's sake. So we're just reminiscing, here. That's all.

VIRGINIA: That's all. Why shouldn't we?

MAURICE: After ten years of nothing?

VIRGINIA: I thought you'd be happy to see me.

MAURICE: You don't turn up to see your ex for no reason. Are you in trouble?
You want money, is that it?

VIRGINIA: No! Of course I don't want money -

MAURICE: Then what exactly are you trying to do here?

VIRGINIA: Why don't we have another drink -

MAURICE: Never mind the drink. What is it you want?

Virginia stills. Her demeanour changes.

VIRGINIA: I won't lie to you, Maurice. I haven't been very well lately. I haven't been myself.
I'm a very happy person, but you wouldn't think it to know me now. I'm not like I was.
There was something I had, and I lost it. It's gone. And ever since I've been floating.
I've been floating, Maurice, and when things go wrong I always think of you, because you're the only one I ever loved -

MAURICE: Virginia -

VIRGINIA: the only man I've ever -

MAURICE: I'm going to have to stop you there.

Opening Night, as adapted by Carissa Licciardello - excerpt from unpublished script (CLASSROOM USE ONLY)

COMPOSING & RESPONDING TO STAGE ACTION

After reading or hearing the script extract read aloud, you may like to note down your response to the scene using the questions listed. Once you have read the scene, answer the below questions.

1. What is the scene is about?
2. What do we know about these characters?
3. What do we learn about the relationship between the characters?
4. Where do we think the action is taking place? What clues in the scene support this?
5. What conflict or tension did we detect?
6. What might be going on under the surface of the dialogue (the subtext)?
7. What might have happened just before this moment? What might happen next?

PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

The elements of production are the technical and visual elements used to manipulate the elements of drama in order to effectively tell a play's story.

In these notes we are going to look at *Opening Night*

1. Lighting Designer's Note
2. Set Model Box, rehearsal set and realisation
3. Costume Reference images and realisation



Set Model Box, by Designer. Leeana Walsman

LIGHTING DESIGNER'S NOTE

NICK SCHLIEPER

Designing *Opening Night* has been a fascinating process and one replete with challenges. The kind of challenges that are great to get your teeth into – that really stretch your imagination and your expertise.

Adapting a film to the stage is always tricky. Theatre and film both have clear areas of strength and those strengths are very different ones. There's no point shifting something from one form to the other, unless the shift enriches the original. Unless the new form can cast more or better light on some aspect of the story, that the original, because of its form, couldn't do as effectively. Given that the original in this case was a film about actors rehearsing a play, which we've turned into a play about actors rehearsing a play, the lens through which the story is viewed becomes quite different and calls for an equally different set of storytelling techniques.

It goes without saying that you have to find a design language that clearly communicates a number of levels (and versions) of reality. To do this well and then elide elegantly and seamlessly between them is challenging enough at the best of times. But then you also have to find a version of that visual language, that is right for the space in which it's performed and this raises a whole other set of considerations. Solutions that might be great in a proscenium arch theatre, where the stage is viewed and the show experienced through a very clearly defined frame, don't necessarily work in a more open, embracing and proximate space like Belvoir.

"Big theatre" tricks either just don't work at all, or they're exposed to be just that – tricks. The nature of the Belvoir space has a way of keeping your

theatre-making honest!

So finding solutions that do the necessary work in terms of clearly communicating what can (and sometimes should!) be a confusing and slippery world, but that also feel honest and appropriate to the space became our goal. We constantly went back and tested each potential "solution" against the touchstone of this space. As a result, many an otherwise perfectly feasible idea, found its way onto the reject pile!

We've had one big advantage in this process, in that Carissa developed the adaptation in parallel to us developing the design. In this way, one process has informed the other.

The function of light in this context, isn't essentially different to many another piece of theatre. It's still there to tell an audience where, when and occasionally why. It still guides the audience's eye and frequently subliminally suggests how the viewer might feel about a character or a moment in the piece. However, the demands of this play, with its many layers and levels of reality push those functions to

a more critical level. The lighting needs to clarify (but occasionally also obfuscate) who's perspective we're supposed to think we're seeing, of any given moment. Whose reality we're witnessing and how reliable is that particular version of reality? It's a fascinating puzzle to unpick and find a way through.

After many months of talking about this, I can't wait to get into the theatre and do it!



Opening Night set. Set design by David Fleischer, Lighting design by Nick Schlieper. Leeana Walsman.

SET DESIGN

REFERENCE IMAGES - THE STAGE ON THE STAGE

Reference images are used by designers to communicate aesthetic concepts with the director or to the cast. These might communicate a moment in the play, or an overall texture or style.



Reference images collected by designer David Fleischer

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA

REFERENCE IMAGES - APARTMENT, HOTEL ROOM



Reference images collected by designer David Fleischer

SET DESIGN

MODEL BOX DESIGNS

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



Initial Design: Opening Night Model Box - by David Fleischer

REHEARSAL SET, MARK-UP OF DESIGN

The set design is interpreted by stage management and a mock up of the set is placed in the rehearsal space to the same dimensions as it will be in the theatre. 'Mark-up' is a term used in stage management meaning to mark out the dimensions. In the image below you can see a tape outline of the raised set.



Rehearsal Set for Opening Night

Questions to consider after seeing this production

1. What are the key differences between the early model box design & the final set design?
2. Why might this change have taken place?
3. How many different locations were represented in the production?
4. How are set pieces and the curtain used to change the space? What impact does this have?
5. How has the designer used stage space, texture, colour and composition to enhance dramatic meaning?

FINAL DESIGN REALISATION



Final Design: Opening Night, Set Design by David Fleischer



Final Design: Opening Night, Set Design by David Fleischer

COSTUME DESIGN

MYRTLE - THE LEAD ACTRESS



Costume Reference images, collected by Mel Page

*Leeana Walsman,
Costume Design by Mel Page*

NANCY - THE YOUNG FAN



Costume Reference images, collected by Mel Page

THE PLAY WITHIN THE PLAY: Costume Design in 'The Second Woman'

In *Opening Night* Costume Designer, Mel Page, had the unique experience of designing a costume for a "costume designer". Kelly within the play *Opening Night* demonstrates some of the processes a costume designer uses in finding the right costume for a character. The fictional designer, Kelly, works with the "Director" and actress to land on the right coat for the character of Virginia in *The Second Woman*, pulling various options from wardrobe (using industry lingo, meaning finding items in the costume storage) and discussing what each coat might symbolise to an audience.

Each coat would have been chosen for *Opening Night* following some of this process, making the process of costuming for *Opening Night* a meta process in itself, with Mel costuming for *Opening Night*, as well as for the play within the play - *The Second Woman*.



Rehearsal image, Costume Design by Mel Page



Jing Xuan Chan as Kelly



Leeana Walsman as Myrtle (dressed as Virginia), Costume Design by Mel Page

REHEARSING OPENING NIGHT

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



Leeanna Walsman, Jing-Xuan Chan

1. What do you think is happening in this scene? Give reasons for your answer
2. What evidence is there that this is a rehearsal?



Luke Mullins, Leeanna Walsman

1. Describe what you see in the photo above
2. What do you think is happening? Give reasons for your answer.



Caitlin Burley, Leeanna Walsman

1. Describe what you see in the photo above.
2. What do you think is happening in this moment?
3. What do you think the relationship is between these characters? Give reasons for your answer



Jing-Xuan Chan, Leeanna Walsman, Toni Scanlan, Luke Mullins, Matthew Zeremes

1. Describe what you see in the picture above.
2. What do you think is happening in this moment? Give reasons for your answers

POST SHOW DISCUSSION

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



Leeanna Walsman & Anthony Harkin

How did the metadrama (play within a play) create additional layers of meaning for the audience? What did you notice about the play *The Second Woman* changing as the story unfolded?



Caitlin Burley & Leeanna Walsman

**How did the play shift your perspective of 'reality'?
How do you think the genre of psychothriller add tension to the story?**



Luke Mullins

How does the play explore the elements of theatre? What impact does this have on an audience?



Leeanna Walsman & Toni Scanlan

**What do you think the play is saying about women aging?
How does it explore this theme?**

WHAT MOMENT IN THE PLAY HAD THE MOST IMPACT ON YOU AND WHY?



Caitlin Burley & Leeanna Walsman

WATCH & LISTEN



Interview | *Opening Night*

Interview with Director/Adapter, Carissa Licciardello

<https://youtu.be/hTrp5xGm5sY>

WATCH NOW



Interview | *Opening Night*

Interview with Actors Leeanna Walsman and Caitlin Burley

<https://youtu.be/7WzX5Tpd89w>

WATCH NOW



Social Media | *Opening Night*

Lots of sneak-peek content, and promotional information can be found on social media.

Take a look at the grid and the stories for more content during the run.



ARTICLES & REVIEWS

"This psychic cacophony is brilliantly executed... and the prelude to an utterly triumphant final act."

- Limelight

READ THE REVIEW



WATCH MORE

CONTACT EDUCATION

PROGRAM

JANE MAY, EDUCATION MANAGER

02 8396 6222

jane@belvoir.com.au

TEXT

STEVIE BRYANT, EDUCATION COORDINATOR

02 8396 6241

stevie@belvoir.com.au

DESIGN

Belvoir Education would like to thank David Fleischer, Mel Page, Xu Yang Chua and Jake Severino for their support creating these resources.

PRODUCTION

MEDIA