

BELVOIR



SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

2 JUN – 10 JUL

By **Hannah Moscovitch**
Directed by **Petra Kalive**



A Melbourne
Theatre Company
production



SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

2 JUN – 10 JUL

RUNNING TIME

1 hour & 20 minutes (no interval)

CONTENT WARNING

Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes contains mature themes, frequent coarse language, sexual references and the use of theatrical haze.

CAST

Dan Spielman as Jon

Izabella Yena as Annie

CREATIVES

Writer **Hannah Moscovitch**

Director **Petra Kalive**

Original Set & Costume Designer

Marg Horwell

Lighting Designer **Rachel Burke**

Composer & Sound Designer

Darius Kedros

Design Associate **Matilda Woodroffe**

Assistant Director **Isabella Vadiveloo**

Intimacy Coordinator

Michala Banas

Movement Consultant

Xanthe Beesley

Stage Manager **Lisette Drew**

Assistant Stage Manager

Holly Fernanda

Produced by

Melbourne Theatre Company

Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes was commissioned by Tarragon Theatre, Toronto, Canada, and is staged by arrangement with Ian Arnold, Catalyst TCM Inc, www.catalysttcm.com

The videotaping or other video or audio recording of the Production is strictly prohibited.

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.

Front cover image by Jo Duck. Rehearsal images by Jacinta Keefe

Dan Spielman





Petra Kalive

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

PETRA KALIVE

We are in the midst of a cultural evolution, reviewing and redressing the power imbalances that have embedded themselves in our culture. It is no wonder then that a play like *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes* finds its place on our stages. It explores the power dynamics between a professor (Jon) and his student (Annie) and the assumed and invisible lines that are crossed because of privilege, entitlement, celebrity and structural authority. What writer Hannah Moscovitch masterfully navigates is the thresholds crossed in a sexual relationship.

The idea of 'threshold' is something that excited me as a director. I was keen to interrogate the space of possibility that Moscovitch opens for us to explore. It has been powerful to explore

thresholds metaphorically and literally in the rehearsal room, be they as entrances and exits, doors, gateways, and character choices. The play as a site of threshold has been the most exciting and fruitful - an artificially constructed space where multiple ideas exist, collide, and expose the subtle and sometimes invisible thresholds of power. This idea found its way into the design quite early on; a world in a state of transition, a space of potential - where the traditional structures have fallen or are yet to be built.

Movement and finding the physical language of a work is always important to me, but particularly so in this work as so much of what occurs between Jon and Annie exists in the unspoken. We have spent much of our rehearsal exploring

not only physical intimacy but the physical terrain of this work – how these live in the spaces between actors and in the actors’ bodies. It has been rich and dynamic work led by Xanthe Beesley that has enabled us to continue to remain playful, available and gentle in a rehearsal room that could have become very cerebral and bogged down in the trauma spectrum in which this play exists. The work has also added a richness and nuance to the actor’s movement, both in their physical responsiveness and the way they physically engage in the world of the play.

The brilliance of Moscovitch is that she places this story in the middle classes, right next door. The challenge in the work is to look in our own

suburban backyards for the imbalance that we unconsciously prop up. My challenge is that, like the design, we take down the walls and exist in this state of threshold for a time – who knows what we might find – a whole new structure may be built, or we might want to tear it all down. I just hope that by talking about the subtlety of how power between genders is so often unspoken and accepted that we can further the conversation about abuses of that power with more nuance and awareness. If we do, we might feel, as Annie finally states, “better now”.





Petra Kalive, Izabella Yena, Dan Spielman, Isabella Vadiveloo

MOVEMENT CONSULTANT NOTE

XANTHE BEESLEY

The 'unspoken' is intrinsic to the collaboration between a director and movement director/consultant. Tapping into all the physical elements in a rehearsal room is our foundation. In a climate where a movement director might be viewed as a bonus – with Petra, this role is integral to the team and essential in realising a work. For *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes* we started early to find a vocabulary of movement to support the actors in their explorations of character and relationship. As we all worked together to build the physical style, the performance language offered a way to reference how the space is used and the actions that are performed and repeated. This became vital in a show about tension, attraction and transgression.

A bit like our own collaborative process, in this play we were particularly interested in the silences between words. Body language, and ways the actors communicate when they're not speaking, is just as fascinating as when they are. In a rehearsal room Petra and I use movement to see into a work, to help summon it into being. Bit by bit movement becomes the key for unlocking images, relationships and staging possibilities. We work together providing outside-in methods. Rather than approaching things psychologically, we'll often use movement to help actors tap into emotional terrain in a safe and surprising way. For this play we asked: how can working though movement help Izabella explore Annie's emotional journey? How can an embodied

process support Dan to interrogate Jon's inner life and explore how this might read on his body? The movement is as vital in this piece as the text, as a key tool in the exploration of Annie and Jon's relationship and the potential it offers for revealing layers of the characters, their intentions, their communication, and their unspoken entangled dynamic.

Movement became the puzzle piece helping to unlock meaning. Developing a pallet of movement possibilities facilitated the actors to access new ideas. It encouraged playfulness and humour which became an essential part of the rehearsal process. This playful approach felt particularly important with *Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes*, for its function in helping the actors to remain grounded. With such serious themes there may have been a tendency to

replicate that gravity in our process – however Petra knew she wanted to use theatre devising approaches and abstract ways of engaging with movement to open up the material and take the pressure off having to 'think up' solutions. We arrived at ideas on the floor as an ensemble and, in this way, movement helped to problem solve.

Sexual Misconduct of the Middle Classes is fascinating for what it is saying, but equally, for interrogating what is not said. Its richness lies in its examination of connection and its scrutiny of what happens when connection fails. I love this piece for its silences and what they mean, the loaded moments, the static moments, the muddiness, and the exploration of communication, miscommunication, misinterpreted communication and for what is spoken when there are no words.



Izabella Yena &
Dan Spielman



Izabella Yena & Dan Spielman



Dan Spielman



Dan Spielman



Izabella Yena



Izabella Yena & Dan Spielman



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Image: Jaimi Joy

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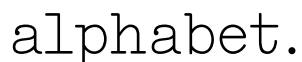
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