

LEARNING RESOURCES



BELVOIR ST
THEATRE

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

9 Nov – 15 Dec

BELVOIR ST. THEATRE PRESENTS

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

Written by Tracy Letts and directed by Eamon Flack, this production of *August: Osage County* opened at Belvoir St Theatre on 14 November 2024. It is co-produced by Black Swan Theatre Company.

CREATIVES

Director Eamon Flack
Set Designer Bob Cousins
Costume Designer Ella Butler
Lighting Designer Morgan Moroney
Composer and Sound Designer Rachel Dease
Vocal/Dialect Coach Laura Farrell
Movement and Fight Director, Intimacy Coordinator Nigel Poulton
Assistant Director Guy Simon
Assistant Director Margaret Thanos
Luke McGettigan Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager Rebecca Dilley
Assistant Stage Manager Sybilla Wajon

CAST

TAMSIN CARROLL Barbara Fordham
BEE CRUSE Johnna Monevata
JOHN HOWARD Beverly Weston
BERT LABONTÉ Bill Fordham
AMY MATHEWS Ivy Weston
JOHNNY NASSER Sheriff Deon Gilbeau
ROHAN NICHOL Steve Heidebrecht
WILL O'MAHONY Little Charles Aiken
PAMELA RABE Violet Weston
ANNA SAMSON Karen Weston
GREG STONE Charles Aiken
HELEN THOMSON Mattie Fae Aiken
ESTHER WILLIAMS Jean Fordham

SUPPORTED BY Blake Beckett Trust

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which Belvoir St. Theatre is built. We also pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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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 Eamon Flack and Executive Director Aaron Beach and Deputy Executive Director Fiona Hulton, 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 offers students and teachers an in-depth look into the work of Belvoir St. and 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 access programs assist schools in Regional NSW and Western Sydney to access the company's work. For keen theatre lovers, Young Belvoir provides enriching experiences, while First Class supports early-career drama teachers with targeted resources and training.

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

CREATIVE TEAM



TRACY LETTS
Writer



EAMON FLACK
Director



BOB COUSINS
Set Designer



ELLA BUTLER
Costume Designer



MORGAN MORONEY
Lighting Designer



RACHAEL DEASE
Composer & Sound Designer



LAURA FARRELL
Voice & Dialect Coach



NIGEL POULTON
Movement and Fight Director,
Intimacy Coordinator



MARGARET THANOS
Assistant Director



GUY SIMON
Assistant Director



LUKE MCGETTIGAN
Stage Manager



REBECCA DILLEY
Assistant Stage Manager



SYBILLA WAJON
Assistant Stage Manager

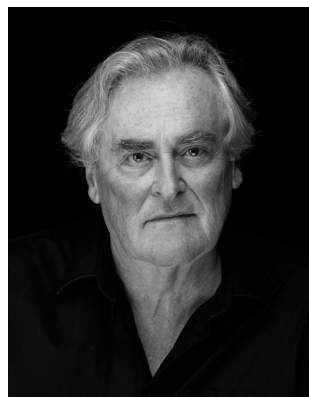
CAST



TAMSIN CARROLL
Barbara Fordham



BEE CRUSE
Johnna Monevata



JOHN HOWARD
Beverly Weston



BERT LABONTÉ
Bill Fordham



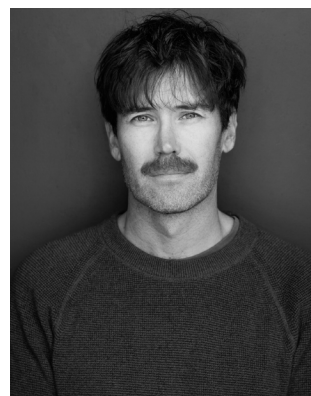
AMY MATHEWS
Ivy Weston



JOHNNY NASSER
Sheriff Deon Gilbeau



ROHAN NICHOL
Steve Heidebrecht



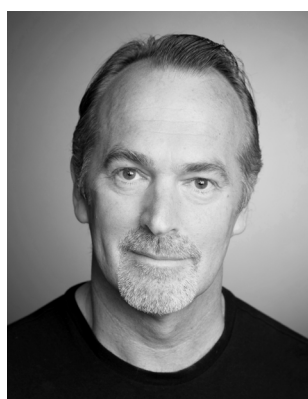
WILL O'MAHONY
Little Charles Aiken



PAMELA RABE
Violet Weston



ANNA SAMSON
Karen Weston



GREG STONE
Charlie Aiken



HELEN THOMPSON
Mattie Fae Aiken



ESTHER WILLIAMS
Jean Fordham



Pamela Rabe (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)

DIRECTOR'S NOTES | EAMON FLACK

The Great Plains run three thousand kilometres long and eight hundred wide from central Canada right down through thirteen of the United States of America as far south as Texas and New Mexico. Once upon a time tens of millions of bison roamed the plains, and their hoofsteps and eating and shitting were almost as great a force as the weather in forming its ecology: grassland, savannah, prairie. For thousands of years dozens of tribal nations made their homes there - Arapaho, Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Choctaw, Nakota, Dakota, Pawnee, Osage... From the buffalo came their food, clothes, shelter, tools, and a whole way of life.

The arrival of English, French, Dutch, Spanish settlers from the sixteenth century on pushed the tribal nations into each other's lands and upended the old rhythms of life on the plains. For centuries the nations fought with the settlers and with each other, relocated, converted to Christianity, signed treaties, formed their own governments - everything to keep hold of their world. All the while European settlement pressed on harder and tighter. In 1830 the Federal Government passed the Indian Removal Act, and in the decades that followed tens of thousands of Native Americans from almost forty tribes across the continent were driven, by violence or lies, into the newly formed Indian Territories on the southern Great Plains.

The Osage Nation, for one, had signed a treaty with the United States in 1825 ceding their traditional lands in what are now Missouri, Oklahoma and Arkansas in exchange for a reservation and protection in Kansas. There, smallpox, cholera, government paternalism and the loss of their way of life devastated their people. In 1870 the Osage sold their reservation in Kansas and bought a million and a half acres from the Cherokee Nation in the Indian Territories. This was the beginning of the Osage Nation Reservation.

The Cheyenne, on the other hand, twice signed treaties that were twice dishonoured by the government, and twice went to war with the United States Army to keep hold of their lands and life on the Plains. In 1864 the Army massacred hundreds of Cheyenne men, women and children at Sandy Creek. The Northern Cheyenne would continue to war against the US for another decade, but in 1867 most of the Southern Cheyenne were forced onto the new Cheyenne Arapaho Reservation in the Indian Territories.

At the same time, the mass slaughter of the buffalo began - for money, for fun, to clear the land for cattle and corn, to cut the plains with railways, and to drive the tribal nations from their lands. Thirty million bison filled the plains before European settlement; by 1890 only a few hundred remained.

For the next century the reservations of the Indian Territories were ruled by a regime of Federal Government "protection" which we would recognise from the mission regime here: languages banned, children taken, wages stolen, resources appropriated...

In 1907 the Indian Territories were merged with Oklahoma Territory and the new state of Oklahoma was decreed the 46th state of the United States. The largest of the state's 77 counties, running alongside the Osage Nation Reservation in the northeast, was Osage County.

*

In 1930, less than a century after Europeans replaced the thousands-year old ecology of the Plains with a new ecology of farming and agriculture, the new ecology collapsed and the Dust Bowl began. Without the buffalo and the grasses the topsoil blew away, the old cycles of drought intensified, blizzards of dust blocked the sun, crops failed,

the old cycles of drought intensified, blizzards of dust blocked the sun, crops failed, livestock starved. Half a million people lost or abandoned their homes and homesteads. Thousands died from dust-pneumonia and malnutrition. About three million people left the Plains altogether.

There was always a ring of Old Testament about the taking and settling of the Plains. It was a brutal, brutalising and vaunted foundation story - the epochal pursuit of a “manifest destiny”. Those 19th century settlers who managed to claw a life out of the Plains had done so by force and grit and God and a fierce sense of the clan, of who belongs to who, who gets what. Nothing or no one would take this away from them. The Dust Bowl taught their descendants the same lesson again, only harder: Hold tight to what you’ve got, because at any moment the Plains could turn into a pit of destitution, defeat, misery, loss. There’s nothing worse than a loser. You do whatever you have to do to stop from sliding into the pit.

*

Eventually that meant electing Donald Trump. Twice. The American way of life has been in collapse for decades now. The lashing out is like nothing we’ve ever seen. Trump’s MAGA movement, multiplied with the dementedness of social media, has licensed a slightly insane outbreak of blame, anger, self-pity, ignorance, paranoia, lies, delusions, revenges, hatreds... And now it has swept to power. What now? “This will truly be the golden age of America,” said Trump on election night, “We are going to help our country heal.” It’s hard to believe that the MAGA movement, even with all the instruments of the Federal Government at its command, will be able to satiate its own appetites let alone heal America. It’s just as likely that MAGA is the last dance of dying way of life that refuses to accept its time is up, more willing to devour its children in the pursuit of some mad idea of revival than entertain the very real possibility that America is terminally fucked up.

A lot like Tracy Letts’ play: great promise declined into pain and addiction; the old voice of humanism turned incoherent and gone AWOL; the hatred of vulnerability and responsibility and the worship of strength and winning; the distracted hubris of liberalism; the neglected habits of shared obligation... Letts wrote his play back in 2006, but the America of the Trump era is all there in proto-type. The questions the play asks are the same questions we all face now as Trump begins his transition back to the White House:

How the hell can this play out in any way that isn’t both ridiculous and terrible? How does a history of brutalisation, violence and lies bring itself to an end? Is there any way out? Or does the whole way of life have to be left to die?



Bob Cousins and Eamon Flack (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)

CHARACTERS

PROGRAM

VIOLET: The Weston family matriarch, 65 years old
BEVERLY: Violet’s husband, once-renowned poet, 69 years old

.....

TEXT

BARBARA FORDHAM: Beverly and Violet’s oldest daughter, 46 years old
BILL FORDHAM: Barbara’s husband, 49 years old
JEAN FORDHAM: Barbara and Bill’s daughter, 14 years old

.....

IVY: Beverly and Violet’s middle daughter, 44 years old
KAREN: Beverly and Violet’s youngest daughter, 40 years old

.....

DESIGN

MATTIE FAE AIKEN: Violet’s sister, 57 years old
CHARLIE AIKEN: Mattie Fae’s husband, 60 years old
LITTLE CHARLES AIKEN: Mattie Fae and Charlie’s son, 37 years old

.....

JOHNNA MONEVATA: A Cheyenne woman employed by Beverly, 26 years old
SHERRIFF DEON GILBEAU: A local sherrif and Barbara’s former boyfriend, 47 years old
STEVE HEIDEBRECHT: Karen’s fiance, 50 years old

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PRODUCTION

MEDIA



Cast in rehearsals (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)



SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE

The play opens in the stifling heat of August in Osage County, Oklahoma, inside the home of the Weston family. Beverly Weston, the aging family patriarch and a once-renowned poet, has recently hired a live-in housekeeper, Johnna, a young Cheyenne woman, to help care for his wife, Violet. Soon after, Beverly disappears, prompting the family to gather. Violet's daughters, Barbara and Ivy, along with other family members, arrive to offer support. Tensions immediately rise, exposing Violet's harsh sarcasm, verbal cruelty, and erratic behavior fueled by her drug addiction. The act concludes with the devastating news that Beverly's body has been discovered in a nearby lake, an apparent suicide.

ACT TWO

The family gathers after Beverly's funeral, and tensions mount. Violet's behavior becomes increasingly erratic. During an explosive family dinner, she taunts each family member, exposing long-buried secrets and resentments. It's revealed that Barbara's marriage to her husband Bill has ended and that Ivy is secretly involved with her cousin, Little Charles. Karen, the youngest daughter, seems oblivious to the family chaos as she excitedly talks about her upcoming marriage to Steve. Barbara, her oldest daughter, tries to take control, but Violet resists fiercely, refusing to give up her pills. The act ends with a fierce struggle between Barbara and Violet, culminating in Barbara wrestling her mother to the ground to try to get her to stop using drugs.

ACT THREE

The third act delves deeper into the family's trauma and buried secrets. Violet opens up about her own painful history. It is revealed that Ivy and Little Charles are not cousins, but half-siblings - the result of an affair between Violet's sister, Mattie-Fae, and Beverly. Barbara, struggling with the fractures in her own family, comes to the painful realisation that she cannot save her mother from herself. The play concludes with Barbara leaving Violet alone. Johnna, the Native American housekeeper, is the only one who remains with Violet.

T.S. ELIOT | AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

PROGRAM

TEXT



Bee Cruse as Johnna Montevata and John Howard as Beverly Weston in Act 1 Scene 1 (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)

August: Osage County by Tracy Letts is a Pulitzer Prize-winning play first written and produced in 2007. The play opens with dialogue from Beverly Weston to his new housekeeper, Johnna Montevata:

"Life is very long ... T. S. Eliot. I mean ... he's given credit for it because he bothered to write it down. He's not the first person to say it ... certainly not the first person to think it. Feel it. But he wrote the words on a sheet of paper and signed it, and the four-eyed prick was a genius ... so if you say it, you have to say his name after it. 'Life is very long': T. S. Eliot."

This line, "Life is very long," appears in stanza five of T.S. Eliot's 'The Hollow Men' (1925), a seminal modernist poem that reflects existential despair and cultural disillusionment. Playwright Tracy Letts uses Eliot's work both as a direct reference and as a thematic undercurrent throughout *August: Osage County*, grounding the play's portrayal of American dysfunction in Eliot's exploration of modernist angst.

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



SOURCE: THE NEW YORKER
Photograph by George Douglas

T.S. Eliot (1888–1965) was an American-born poet, essayist, and critic. Known for influential poems like 'The Waste Land' (1922) and 'The Hollow Men' (1925), Eliot's work explores themes of alienation, spiritual desolation, and the fractured nature of modern life, reflecting the uncertainties and disillusionment of the 20th century. His poetry typically uses fragmentation, vivid imagery, allusion, symbolism, and varied verse forms to convey themes of disillusionment, spiritual desolation, and the complexities of modern life.

CHORAL PERFORMANCE | CLASSROOM EXERCISE #1

As a class, read aloud lines 1-9 from T.S Eliot's 'The Hollow Men':

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass
Or rats' feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar.

.....

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does Eliot's choice of words like "hollow" and "stuffed" suggest about the inner lives of these "men"?
- What images in this passage contribute to a sense of desolation or emptiness?
- How does the phrase "quiet and meaningless" shape the mood of the poem?
- Why might Eliot compare the men's voices to "wind in dry grass" and "rats' feet over broken glass"?

CHORAL PERFORMANCE EXERCISE:

- In small groups of 3-5, create a choral performance of the 9 lines from T.S. Eliot's poem.
- Experiment with different ways to deliver the lines, such as varying volume, pitch, and speed. You might include solo lines, moments of unison, repetition, or overlapping dialogue. Consider layering the performance with body percussion or sound effects.
- The aim is to capture and convey the mood and atmosphere of the poem through your performance.

CONTEXT | OSAGE COUNTY

August: Osage County is set in the home of the Weston family, just outside the small town of **Pawhuska in Osage County, Oklahoma**.

Osage County itself is named after the **Osage Nation, a Native American tribe** with a longstanding and often troubled history tied to the region.

COLONISATION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT:

The colonisation of the country we now call America began with Christopher Columbus's arrival in 1492, sparking European interest in the New World. British settlers later arrived on the East Coast, eventually establishing the Thirteen Colonies.

As tensions grew over British rule, the American colonies fought for independence, leading to the Revolutionary War and the birth of the United States in 1776.

After independence, westward expansion drove settlers to claim land further across the continent at the expense of Native American territories. This period saw rising tensions and discriminatory policies against Indigenous populations, whose land and culture were severely impacted by forced removal and frontier conflicts—tensions that continue today in struggles over land rights, cultural preservation, and social justice for Native American communities.

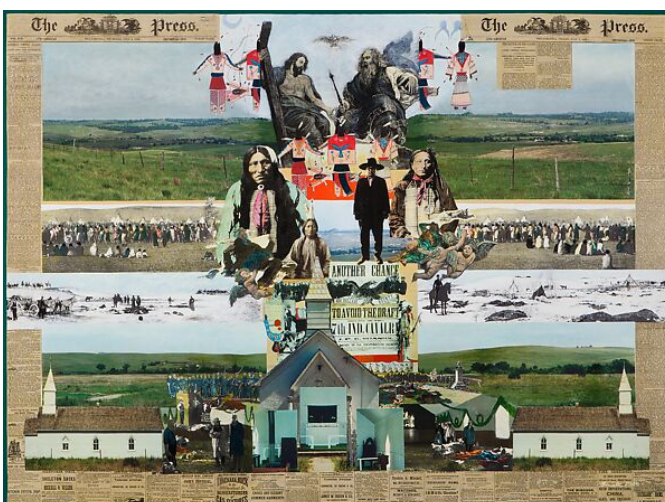


The Landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, 1620 (1869)

ENGRAVER: JOSEPH ANDREWS

SOURCE: METMUSEUM.ORG/ART

This engraving by Joseph Andrews, based on a painting by Peter Frederick Rothenmel, dramatises the arrival of the first British pilgrims in what is now known as Massachusetts. In the upper right-hand corner, Native Americans stand on a cliff face, observing their arrival.



Wounded Knee #III (2001)

ARTIST: ARTHUR AMIOTTE

SOURCE: METMUSEUM.ORG/

This artwork by Oglala Lakota painter and collage artist Arthur Amiotte depicts his family's experience of the Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890, a tragic event that occurred amid ongoing tension between the U.S. government and Native American communities. During this massacre, the U.S. Army attempted to disarm a group of Lakota people and ultimately killed over 150 members of the Native American community.

MANIFEST DESTINY

“It was our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our multiplying millions.” – John O’Sullivan

Manifest Destiny was a 19th-century doctrine that held that the expansion of the United States across the North American continent was both justified and inevitable. John L. O’Sullivan, a journalist who coined the term in 1845, championed the belief that Americans had a divine right to expand their territory. This idea was rooted in American exceptionalism—the belief that the United States had a unique role in promoting democracy and civilisation.

The belief that the U.S. was destined to bring democracy and progress to “less civilized” peoples fuelled imperialism and the ambition of settlers moving westward. Driven by their quest for land, homesteaders disregarded the rights and presence of Native Americans.

As settlers encroached upon Indigenous lands, Native Americans faced displacement, violence, and cultural erasure. The ideology of Manifest Destiny legitimised these actions, portraying them as a noble pursuit rather than an act of aggression.



American Progress, 1872, by John Gast
Oil on Canvas

Take a look at this image by American artist John Gast, painted in 1872.

- What different groups/figures can you see in the artwork?
- In what way does this image reflect the ideology of Manifest Destiny?

TIMELINE

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA

1492 – Columbus Lands in America

Columbus arrives in the Caribbean, beginning European exploration of the Americas.

1607 – British Settlers Arrive

The first permanent British colony is established at Jamestown, Virginia.

1775-1783 – American War of Independence

The Thirteen Colonies (British colonies on the North American Coast) revolt against British rule.

1776 – Declaration of Independence

The Thirteen Colonies declare independence from Britain on July 4.

1800s – Westward Expansion

American settlers migrate westward in search of land and opportunity.

1830 – Indian Removal Act

President Jackson enacts the Indian Removal Act, forcing over 100,000 Native Americans to relocate west of the Mississippi River.

1868 – Treaty of Fort Laramie

The U.S. signs the treaty with Native tribes, establishing the Great Sioux Reservation, but this is later violated.

Late 1800s – Native Americans on Reservations

Many Native tribes are forcibly moved to reservations, disrupting their traditional ways of life. Osage County was one such reservation.

1924 – Indian Citizenship Act

Native Americans are granted U.S. citizenship, but many states find ways to restrict their voting rights.

2000s – Ongoing Land and Sovereignty Issues

Native American tribes continue to advocate for land rights, sovereignty, and cultural preservation.



Members of the Anishnabek Nation protest the construction of an oil pipeline on sacred land in 2016.

SOURCE: *New York Times*, Alyssa Schukar



"THIS COUNTRY, THIS EXPERIMENT, AMERICA, THIS HUBRIS.
HERE TODAY, GONE TOMORROW."

- AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY, ACT 3 SCENE 3

THE AMERICAN DREAM

The American Dream is a cultural ideal in the United States, representing the belief that anyone can achieve success and prosperity through hard work and determination. Central to this ethos are values of individualism, self-reliance, and equality, promoting the idea that everyone should have access to opportunities. Material success, often symbolised by homeownership and financial stability, is a common aspiration.

In 2007, when Tracy Letts wrote *August: Osage County*, the American Dream was facing significant challenges, as the country entered a period of uncertainty and crisis that reshaped Americans' views on opportunity, stability, and success.

- **Great Recession:** Economic instability loomed, endangering jobs and livelihoods.
- **Iraq War:** The costly war deepened public distrust in government and drained resources.
- **End of Bush Administration:** Political divisions grew, and many felt disillusioned with leadership.
- **Rising Divorce Rates:** Shifts in family structure affected financial stability and signaled a decline in the traditional nuclear family.
- **Housing Market Crisis:** Shattered prospects of homeownership and inflicted financial jeopardy.
- **Economic Inequality:** Wealth disparity grew, limiting upward mobility.

In what ways does the American Dream appear to be in even further decline in 2024?



In 1967, Australian painter Brett Whiteley traveled to America. He felt that the nation was on the verge of collapse, describing it as "starting to fall apart...having a nervous breakdown." This experience inspired him to create an artwork titled *The American Dream*, which consists of more than 20 panels. For Whiteley, the artwork moves from a "tranquil, Eden-like pacific island" to an "apocalyptic heart attack or breakdown."

Consider these two panels from Whiteley's work.
What are some of the feelings that arise from looking at this piece of work?

Quotes from | *Difficult Pleasure: A Portrait of Brett Whiteley* (1989)

American Dream, 1967, by Brett Whiteley
SOURCE: www.mutualart.com

SCRIPT ANALYSIS | CLASSROOM EXERCISE #2

PROGRAM

This monologue occurs in Act III, Scene I of *August: Osage County*. Following the explosive argument between Barbara and Violet over Violet's drug use at the end of Act II, the three Weston sisters find themselves together, sharing a drink. Violet enters, "shaky but mainly luicd", before recounting a story from her childhood:

TEXT

(ACT 3, SCENE 1)

I ever tell you the story of Raymond Qualls? Not much story to it. Boy I had a crush on when I was thirteen or so. Rough-looking boy, beat-up Levis, messy hair. Terrible underbite. But he had these beautiful cowboy boots, shiny chocolate leather. He was so proud of those boots, you could tell, way he'd strut around, all arms and elbows, puffed up and cocksure. I decided I needed to get a girly pair of those same boots and I convinced myself he'd ask me to go steady. He'd see me in those boots and say "Now there's the gal for me." Found the boots in a window downtown and just went crazy: praying for those boots, rehearsing the conversation I'd have with Raymond when he saw me in my boots. Must've asked my momma a hundred times if I could get those boots. "What do you want for Christmas, Vi?" "Momma, I'll give all of it up just for those boots." Bargaining, you know? She started dropping hints about a package under the tree she had wrapped up, about the size of a boot box, nice wrapping paper. "Now, Vi, don't you cheat and look in there before Christmas morning." Little smile on her face. Christmas morning, I was up like a shot, boy, under the tree, tearing open that box. There was a pair of boots, all right... men's work boots, holes in the toes, chewed up laces, caked in mud and dog shit. Lord, my momma laughed for days.

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

DISCUSS AS A CLASS:

- Who do you think Violet is talking to when she tells this story? What clues are there?
- Did the end of the story surprises you? Why or why not?
- What does this story tell the audience about Violet's childhood?

MEDIA



Pamela Rabe and Anna Samson (2024, by Brett Boardman)



Pamela Rabe (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)

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 the costume and set design for *August: Osage County*.

COSTUME DESIGNER

DESIGNER'S NOTE | ELLA BUTLER

We looked at a range of source material for the costumes of *August: Osage County*. Along with the usual points of reference, we looked at community pages of Pawhuska, Oklahoma, contacted their local police and observed family moments shared in obituaries. Eamon and I wanted to authentically craft these characters to be of America in 2007, whilst responding to the theatrical concepts of this Belvoir production. Bob Cousins presents in the set design an artefact of a house, as the family home. To complement this concept, we refined the details of the costumes: an overstocked shirt pocket, faded seam lines in a dress that only now comes out for a funeral, and dust worn boots that have travelled the plains. Most of the pieces are second hand / found pieces; few are store bought first hand. My hope is that each piece feels it has belonged to the characters for a lifetime, embedded in their past and how they are embodied on stage.

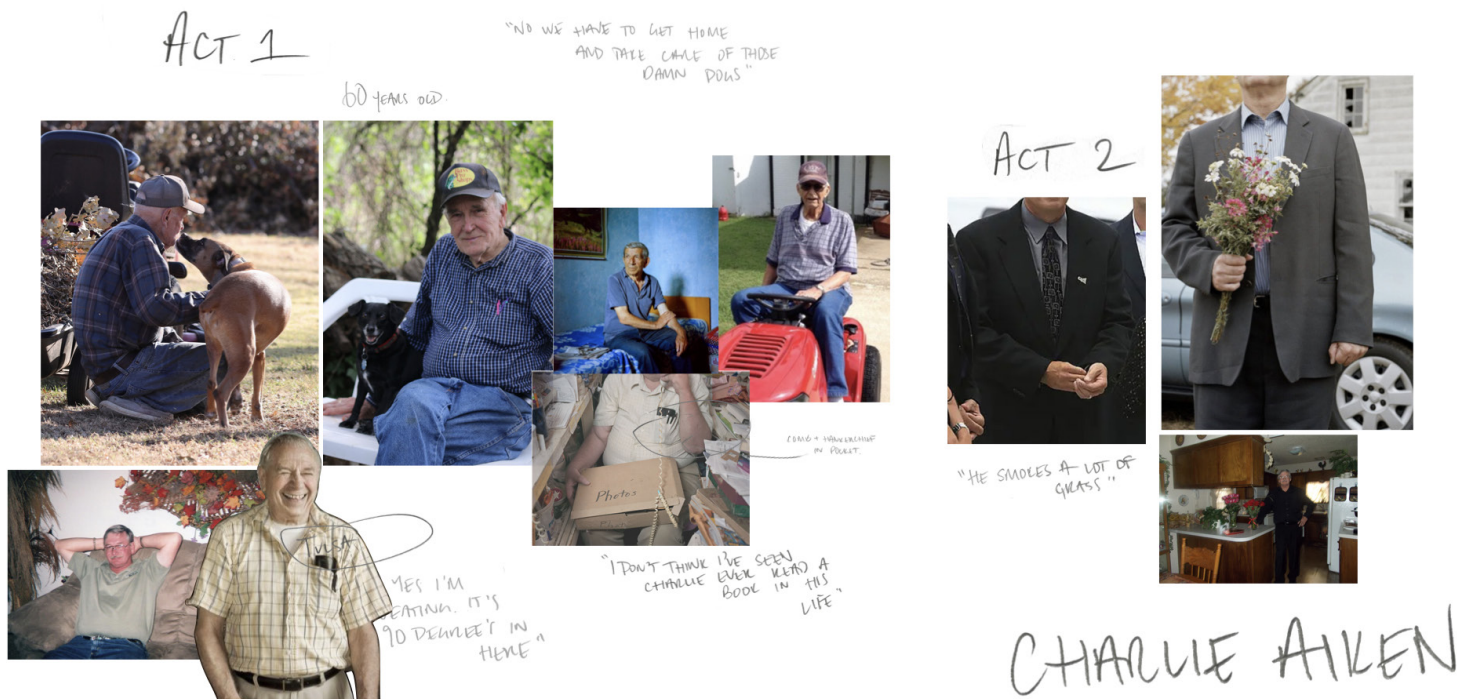
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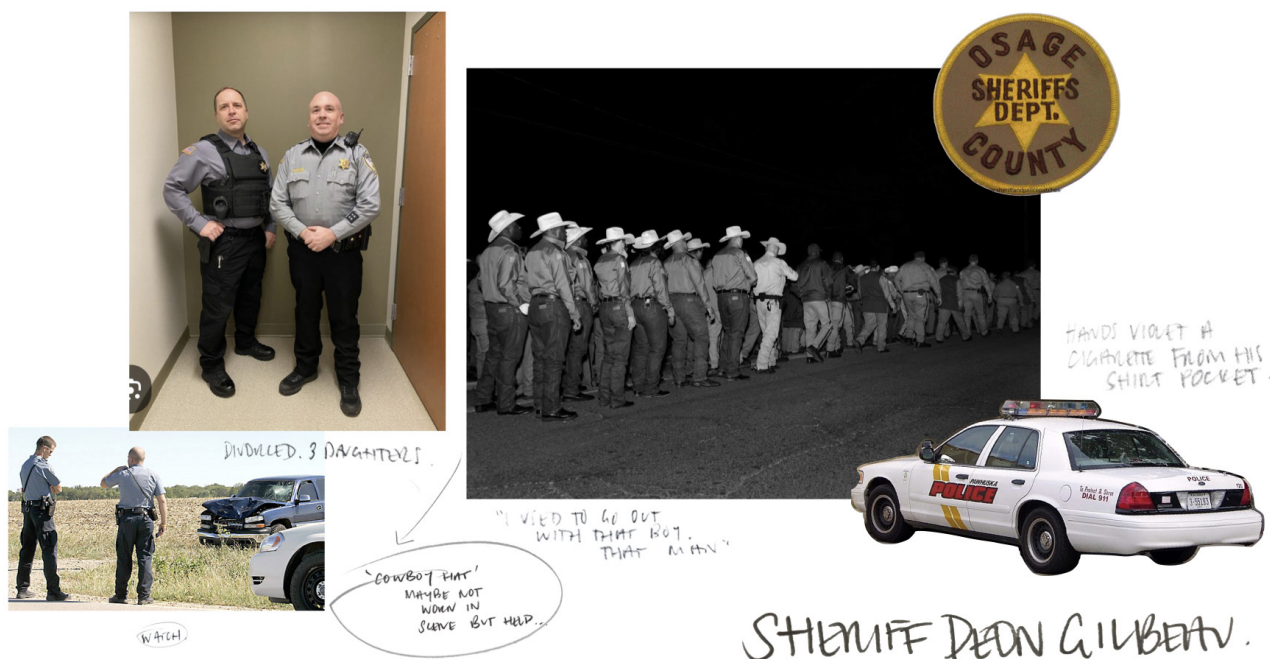


Ella Butler (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)

Examine Ella Butler's digital mood boards for the characters Violet Weston, Charlie Aiken, Johana Monateva, and Sherif Deon Gilbeau.

What insights do these boards provide about the designer's creative process?





- What words would you use to describe the costumes in each of these mood boards?
- In her Designer's Notes she says: "My hope is that each piece feels it has belonged to the characters for a lifetime, embedded in their past and how they are embodied on stage." How do you think these mood boards reflect this "hope"?
- Compare these initial mood boards with the final costumes in production on the next page. What are some of the elements that Ella Butler has incorporated into the final designs?

COSTUMES IN PRODUCTION

DESIGNED BY ELLA BUTLER | PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRETT BOARDMAN



VIOLET WESTON



CHARLIE AIKEN



JOHNNA MOTEVATA



SHERIFF DEON GILBEAU

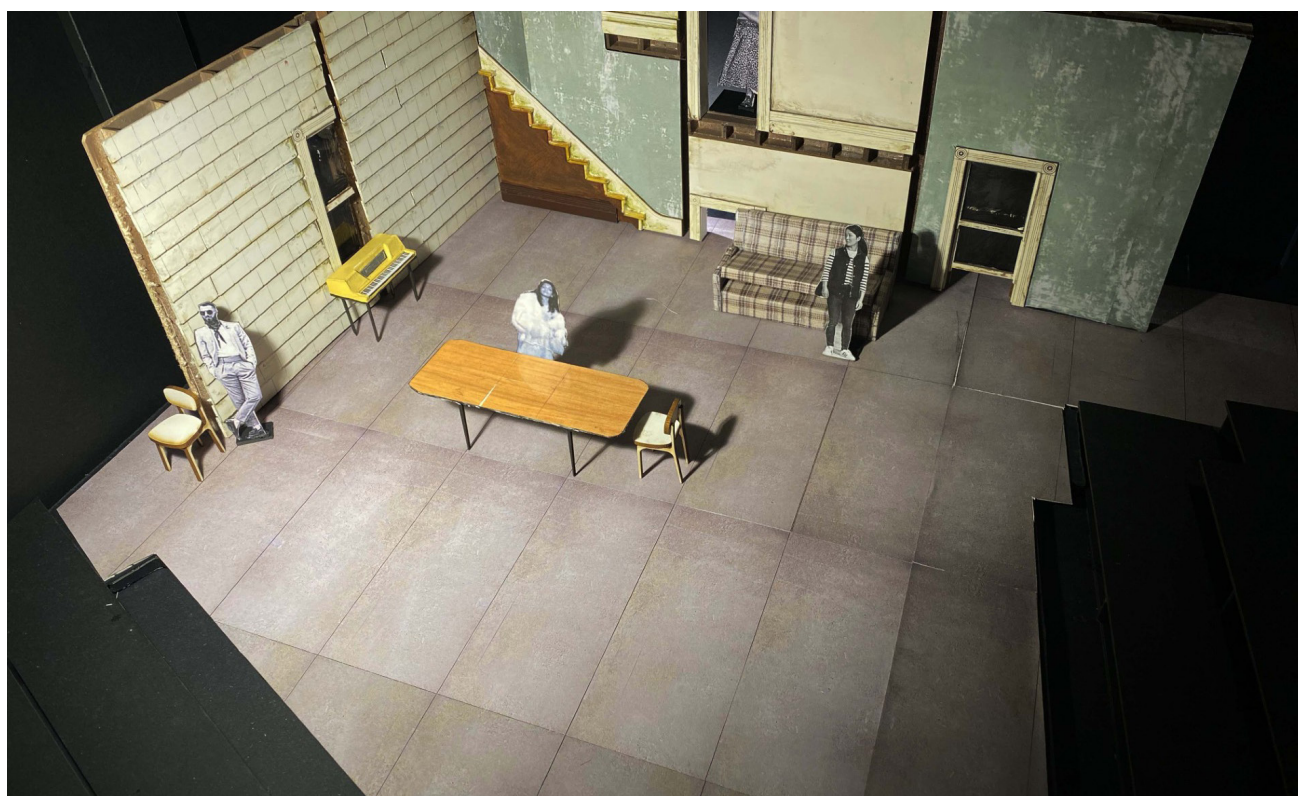
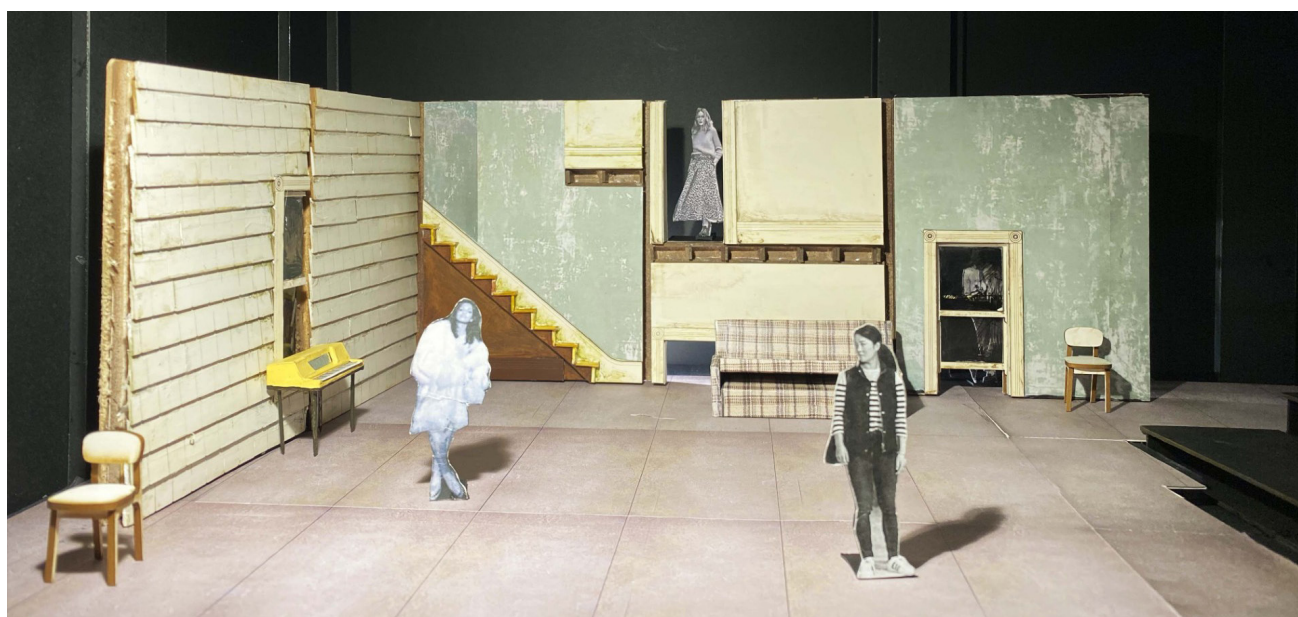
SET DESIGNER

BOB COUSINS

In the opening stage directions of *August: Osage County*, Tracy Letts describes:

"A rambling country house outside Pawhuska, Oklahoma, sixty miles northwest of Tulsa. More than a century old, the house was probably built by a clan of successful Irish homesteaders. Additions, renovations, and repairs have essentially modernized the house until 1972 or so, when all structural care ceased."

Examine the model box created by Set Designer Bob Cousins. How has he attempted to capture the essence of this house while considering the structural limitations of the Belvoir's Upstairs Theatre Stage?





How would you describe the set design's portrayal of the Weston family home? What words capture its atmosphere and character?



Notice the image of bison (or buffalo) that Bob Cousins has placed at the back of the set:

The bison holds deep cultural and spiritual significance for many Native American tribes. It was central to their way of life, providing food, clothing, tools, and materials for shelter. The bison was often viewed as a sacred gift, representing the Earth's generosity and the cyclical nature of life. However, during westward expansion, white colonists and the U.S. government systematically slaughtered millions of bison, nearly driving the species to extinction. This mass destruction disrupted Native American cultures, leading to economic hardship and undermining their spiritual connection to the land.



IMAGES OF THE SET IN PRODUCTION

SET DESIGNER | BOB COUSINS



Bob Cousins (2024, by Brett Boardman)



Greg Stone, Helen Thomson and Amy Mathews (2024, by Brett Boardman)



Pamela Rabe and Amy Mathews (2024, by Brett Boardman)



Pamela Rabe and Tamsin Carroll (2024, by Brett Boardman)



John Howard (2024, by Brett Boardman)

- In what ways was the set different to the original model box design?
- Was there anything that surprised you about how the actors used the set?

REHEARSING: AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



Cast and creatives in the rehearsal room (2024, Brett Boardman)

- Describe what you see in the photo above.
- What does this image tell you about the rehearsal process for a cast and creative team?



Pamela Rabe and Cast (2024, Brett Boardman)

- Describe what you see in the photo above.
- What do you think is happening in this scene?



Pamela Rabe (2024, Brett Boardman)



Bert LaBonté and Tamsin Carroll (2024, Brett Boardman)

- Aside from learning their lines, what else might an actor use their script for in rehearsals?
- What can you see stuck on the wall behind Bert and Tamsin?



Will O'Mahony and Greg Stone (2024, Brett Boardman)

- What do you think is happening in this moment?
- What might be the relationship between these two characters?

POST SHOW DISCUSSION

PROGRAM

TEXT



Bee Cruse, Tamsin Carroll, Bert LaBonté, and Johnny Nassar (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)

How did this production make you feel?

DESIGN



Pamela Rabe and Cast (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)

Which character did you feel most connected to in the show?

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



Pamela Rabe (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)

What do you think this play is saying about the world we live in?



Tamsin Carroll and Anna Samson (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)

Which scene was most shocking to you as an audience member?

READ: SMH

In November 2024, writer Benjamin Law interviewed Pamela Rabe for the Sydney Morning Herald about her acting career. The article, titled '*Adrenaline junkie*': Pamela Rabe on the physical toll of acting, is available **HERE**.

"Most actors – particularly actors who stay in the game – have to be adrenaline junkies. You're in an experience that's energetic, energising and exhausting, over 10 weeks or three months, then there'll be a ton of grieving. You hope that something else comes along. Then you reset and have another adrenaline shot."

- PAMELA RABE, SMH



Pamela Rabe at Belvoir (2024, Photography by Louie Douvis)



BELVOIR BRIEFING | LIVESTREAM RECORDING

Get the inside scoop from cast and creatives involved in creating *August: Osage County* at the Belvoir Briefing on 31 Oct 2024.

WATCH NOW



INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR

Listen to Director Eamon Flack introduce *August: Osage County* as part of Belvoir's 2024 Season Launch.

WATCH NOW



PAMELA RABE ON TODAY SHOW

Head to our Instagram page to hear Pamela Rabe talk about her upcoming role as Violet in *August: Osage County* on the Today Show.

WATCH NOW



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