



BELVOIR ST
THEATRE

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

9 Nov – 15 Dec



**Belvoir St Theatre &
Black Swan State Theatre Company** present

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

**A play by Tracy Letts
Directed by Eamon Flack**

The World Premiere of *August: Osage County* was presented in June 2007 by Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Chicago, IL; Martha Lavey, Artistic Director and David Hawkanson, Executive Director.

August: Osage County opened on Broadway at the Imperial Theatre on December 4, 2007. It was produced by Jeffrey Richards, Jean Doumanian, Steve Traxler, Jerry Frankel, Ostar Productions, Jennifer Manocherian, The Weinstein Company, Debra Black, Daryl Roth, Ronald Frankel, Marc Frankel, Barbara Freitag, Rick Steiner and Staton Bell Group.

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Supported by **Chair's Circle &
Blake Beckett Trust**

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

RUN TIME: 3 hours 30 minutes (incl. 2x15 minute intervals)

CAST

Tamsin Carroll

Barbara Fordham

Bee Cruse

Johnna Monevata

John Howard

Beverly Weston

Bert LaBonté

Bill Fordham

Amy Mathews

Ivy Weston

Johnny Nasser

Sheriff DeonGilbeau

Rohan Nichol

Steve Heidebrecht

Will O'Mahony

Little Charles Aiken

Pamela Rabe

Violet Weston

Anna Samson

Karen Weston

Greg Stone

Charlie Aiken

Helen Thomson

Mattie FaeAiken

Esther Williams

Jean Fordham

CREATIVES

Writer

Tracy Letts

Director

Eamon Flack

Set Designer

Bob Cousins

Costume Designer

Ella Butler

Lighting Designer

Morgan Moroney

Composer and Sound Designer

Rachael Dease

Vocal/Dialect Coach

Laura Farrell

Movement and Fight Director,

Intimacy Coordinator

Nigel Poulton

Wig Stylist/Supervisor

Lauren Proietti

Assistant Director

Guy Simon

Assistant Director

Margaret Thanos

Stage Manager

Luke McGettigan

Assistant Stage Manager

Rebecca Dilleý

Assistant Stage Manager

Sybilla Wajon

WARNING

August: Osage County addresses adult themes such as drug and alcohol addiction. This production also includes the use of herbal cigarettes.

We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we share our stories.

Cover photography by **Daniel Boud**
Rehearsal photography by **Brett Boardman**





Eamon Flack

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

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, 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 by the dementedness of social media, has licensed an insane outbreak of blame, anger, self-pity, ignorance, paranoia, lies, delusions, revenges, hatreds... And now it has swept to power. "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?



Ella Butler

COSTUME 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 detail of costume: 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.

"MY WIFE TAKES PILLS..."



HEADSCARF



ACT 1

"IS ANYONE SUPPOSED TO SMOKE?"



"MY WIFE IS OLD
BROODER NOT JET
IN THE ANTER-
PHYSICAL STATE."

ACT 2

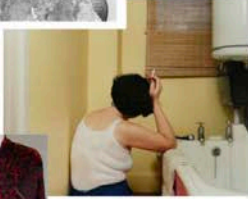
HAT / SUNDRIES



"SHE'S A BIRD
THAT'S BOUND TO
WITHOUT ANYONE
TO STAND BY HER
SIDE. THAT'S IT."



BLACK/RED BLOOMER
DESIGN DOWN



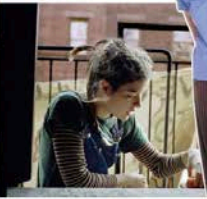
BLACK PISTOLS

MOUTH CANCER

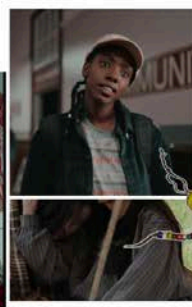
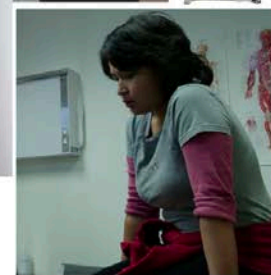
"DO YOU THINK I'M PRETTY?"

VIOLET WESTON.

"IT'S A CHEYENNE TRADITION"



MONTEVATA "YOUNG BIRD"



"WE WEAR IT FOR THE
REST OF OUR LIVES"



TWENTY SIX YEARS OLD



COMMUNITY
COLLEGE
NURSING



"I NEED THE WORK"

JOHANNA MONTEVATA

ACT 1

"THIS WE HAVE TO GET HOME
AND TAKE CARE OF THOSE
OWN DOGS"

60 YEARS OLD



THAT'S A CHARACTER
IN THEM



"YES I'M
MAKING IT'S
TO REMEMBER IN
HOME"

"I DON'T THINK I'VE SEEN
CHARLIE LOOK THAT OLD
IN HIS
LIFE"

ACT 2



"HE CARRIES A LOT OF
GAINS"



CHARLIE AIKEN



Pamela Rabe



Helen Thomson



Bert LaBonté



Tamsin Carroll



Rohan Nichol



Amy Mathews



Bee Cruse



Esther Williams



Johnny Nasser



Will O'Mahony



John Howard



Anna Samson



Greg Stone



Rebecca Dilley & Guy Simon



Rohan Nichol & Esther Williams





Pamela Rabe & Amy Mathews



Will O'Mahony



Tamsin Carroll & Bert LaBonté



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~ Dom

A QUICK LOOK AT THE SYDNEY RETREAT

- 28** It is a 28 day residential program.
- ♂** Our program is based on AA principles. The most successful way to prevent your client from reoffending. See *Cochrane Review*
- ♀** All staff and volunteers are in recovery
- 🏠** Male and female
- ♂♀** Many of our clients, bailed from correctional facilities, have found a recovery solution at The Sydney Retreat
- \$** The admission fee is \$11,450

* cochrane.org/news/new-cochrane-review-finds-alcoholics-anonymous-and-12-step-facilitation-programs-help-people



the sydney retreat

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