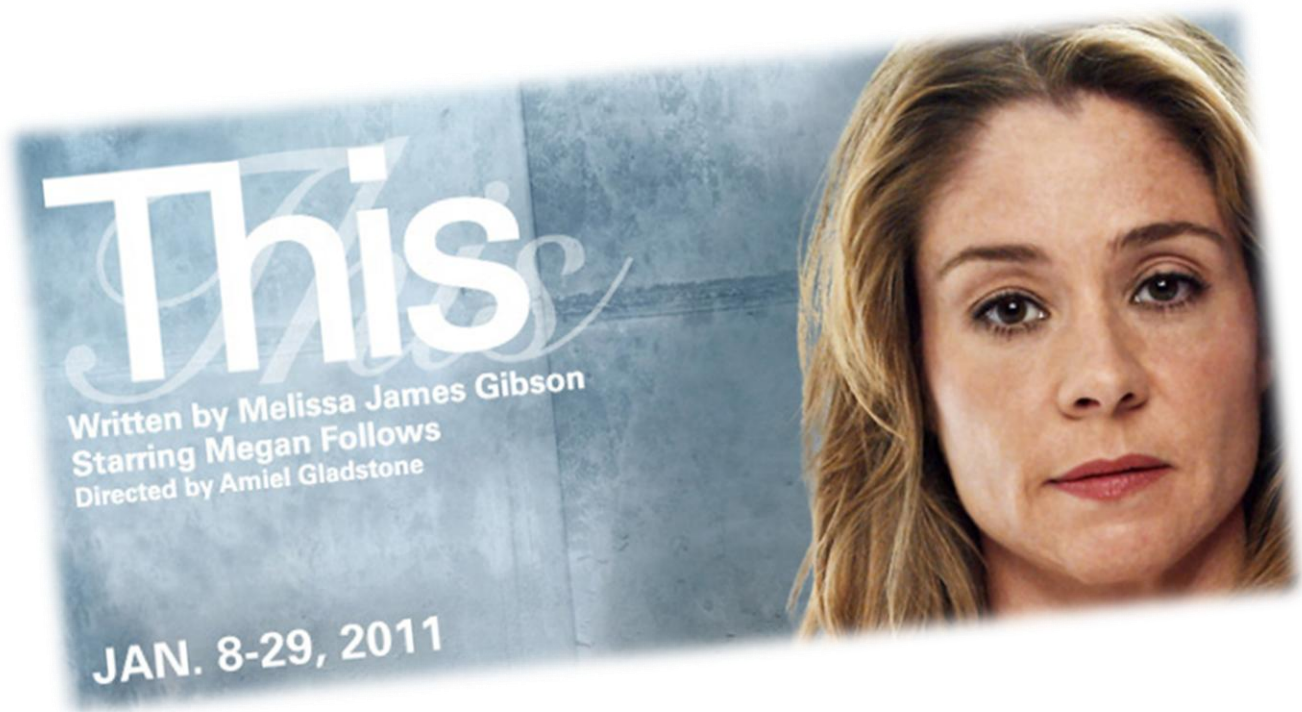


PLAY GUIDE

PART 1 OF 2

[Part 2: suggested practical lessons and activities; available for downloading at vancouverplayhouse.com/education-outreach]

CREATED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE PLAYHOUSE TEACHERS ADVISORY BOARD (PTAB)



SUGGESTED THEMES AND SUITABILITY

INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE | CAPITALISM AND SOCIALISM | MIDLIFE CRISIS | PARENTHOOD | RESPONSIBILITY
| LOVE | SELF-DOUBT | GRIEF | ALTRUISM | FRIENDSHIP | SUITABLE FOR GRADE 9 AND UP

ABOUT THE SHOW

This premiered at Playwrights Horizons* in New York City, Nov. 6, 2009 to Jan. 3, 2010. Directed by Daniel Aukin, it featured Louis Cancelmi, Eisa Davis, Glenn Fitzgerald, Julianne Nicholson and Darren Pettie.

*Playwrights Horizons is a writer's theatre dedicated to the support and development of contemporary American playwrights, composers and lyricists, and to the production of their new work. Under the leadership of Artistic Director Tim Sanford and Managing Director Leslie Marcus, Playwrights Horizons continues to encourage the new work of veteran writers while nurturing an emerging generation of theatre artists. In its 39 years, Playwrights Horizons has presented over 350 writers and is the recipient of numerous awards and honors. Outstanding productions include four Pulitzer Prize winners: Doug Wright's *I Am My Own Wife*, Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine's *Sunday in the Park with George*, Alfred Uhry's *Driving Miss Daisy* and Wendy Wasserstein's *The Heidi Chronicles*. Visit www.playwrightshorizons.org

INTERVIEW WITH MELISSA JAMES GIBSON

[An excerpt from "Gothamist" by John Del Signore, December 22, 2009](#)

***This* seemed more naturalistic and narrative-based than some of your previous work. Do you agree with that assessment and was that something you had in mind when you were writing it?** No, it really wasn't intentional at all, and I don't really think in those terms, per se. I respect people's view of it being that way, but honestly, I was just, as always, I was just focusing on what I was focusing on and it unfolded the way it did. But I think you're right; people tend to experience it that way. But I didn't set out for it to be more normal or anything. [Laughs]

[One critic wrote that](#) he felt the story was about "how we process love, hurt and loss by concocting tidy stories to recall our experience, or reshape it." Do you agree with that? I think that's one perspective on it. Really, the whole thing to me—which is another way of saying what he just said, I guess—is about grappling with mortality from the different characters' vantage points. And just that, grappling with that big old subject, that we grapple with every day, sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly.

Were you thinking about death more when you were writing this, more than usual? I think maybe I was, yeah. I know I was. I lost some friends in a very short period of time, I lost a number of people who are dear to me. So although I started writing before that was the case, I think inevitably it informed the way in which it got explored.

There's a lot of apologizing and saying "I'm sorry" in *This*. Where does that come from for you? Yeah. Well, that too sort of happened. There's a lot that the characters in this play feel sorry for, but I'm just sort of interested in that expression too because they're default words we all have. And sometimes they mean something and sometimes they're hollow. I was interested in exploring the gradations.

Your titles tend to be usually... different. Have you ever thought about why the titles of your plays are so different from and open-ended. Does that make sense? I think so. I don't know, it's very much a gut thing. I try things on in my head or on the draft, and then just settle on what feels right. *This* is what felt right for this, because it's so unspecific and yet weirdly specific at the same time, which felt right for this piece. It's very much a gut thing each time.

Yeah, I overheard somebody as they were leaving the theater, saying they thought it was a perfectly-titled piece, to them it really evoked describing a relationship, like, "ugh, all *this*." Yes, that's hard to name. That's what I'm always drawn to. I think that's what all artists are drawn to, trying to name the unnameable.

The play struck me as very New York, and I can't actually recall if there are any geographically specific aspects to it, but did you have that in mind, did you feel like you were writing a play about people living in New York? Yes, that's what I was imagining for sure. I love this place, this urban environment is where most of my plays have been set so far, in one way or another.

SUGGESTED PLAY ACTIVITY [A SAMPLER]

Type: pre-viewing | **Suitability:** grade 9+ | **Suggested by:** Dan Adrian (Teacher, Moscrop Secondary; PTAB Member)

A FUN, LITTLE PARTY GAME This game is taken directly from the actual play. The characters play this game in the first act. This game is a great activity to do as a pre-creative-writing activity as it encourages all students to think and develop their own stories. **Game:** Have one person leave the room. Before they leave, tell them that you (the rest of the group) are going to collaborate and create a story. When the person returns their task will be to try figure out the story. Once the person has left the room, then you can fill the rest of the group in on the game. This, in fact, is not really a game, it is "an interesting psychological exercise because the player writes her own story" (Gibson, 23). The reality of it is that there is no story. The story will essentially be written by the person who is outside – they will create their own story, while thinking that they are simply guessing the story that the class has conceived.

The only rules are as follows:

1. The player can only ask YES/NO questions
2. If he/she asks a question that ends in a VOWEL everyone answers NO
3. If he/she asks a question that ends in a CONSONANT everyone answers YES
4. If he/she asks a question that ends in a "Y" everyone answers MAYBE

Once you have finished explaining the rules, and taken some "time" to "set up the story", let the person who is outside back inside. Explain again that they can only ask YES/NO questions and allow them to begin. You will start to see a story unfold as the class provides their simple answers, while the player begins to create their own story. Encourage the player who is guessing to "talk out the story aloud" so that the class can ensure that he/she is completely clear about the story.

Often two things will happen. Either the player will come to realize that some things aren't adding up, at which point you may need to end it and explain the reality of the situation. Conversely, the player may fully tell the whole story all the way until the end, at which point you will also need to explain what has happened. Either way, it is a fun activity that the students can experience, and it promotes creative story telling skills. Furthermore, students will find enjoyment seeing the game unfold before their eyes as they watch it performed during the play itself.

FOR MORE ACTIVITIES VISIT VANCOUVERPLAYHOUSE.COM/EDUCATION-OUTREACH

THANK YOU TO

our PTAB Members: **DAN** Adrian / Moscrop Secondary; **CHERYL** Causley / Crofton House School; **GARY** Davis, City School; **MURIEL** Densford / Sir Winston Churchill; **ERIN** McGinley/ Moscrop Secondary; **WARREN** McKinnon / UBC, Continuing Studies; **YVONNE** Price / Cloverdale Learning Centre; **HEATHER** Robbie / David Thompson Secondary; **SAL** Robinson, City School; **JOSH** Weiss / Tamanawis Secondary; **STASA** Andric, **MEREDITH** Elliott and **JOHN** McHenry / Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company who play an integral role in the creation of our 2010/2011 Play Guides.
Interested in joining our PTAB? Call **604 637 3094**

CREATORS



MELISSA JAMES GIBSON, PLAYWRIGHT | Melissa James Gibson's plays include *This* (Susan Smith Blackburn Prize finalist); *[sic]* (OBIE Award for playwriting, Kesselring Prize, *The Best Plays of 2001-02*); *Suitcase or, those that resemble flies from a distance* (NEA/TCG Theatre Residency Program for Playwrights); *Brooklyn Bridge*, with a song by Barbara Brousal (AT&T Onstage award); and *Current Nobody* (Susan Smith Blackburn Prize finalist). Her work has been produced and/or developed at Playwrights Horizons, Soho Rep, La Jolla Playhouse, The Children's Theatre Company, Steppenwolf, Center Theatre Group; ATF, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, and the Sundance Institute Theatre Lab, among others, regionally and internationally. Current commissions: Atlantic Theater Company; Manhattan Theater Club (Sloan Foundation). Honors: Jerome Fellow; MacDowell Colony Fellow; Whiting Writers Award; Lucille Lortel Foundation Playwrights' Fellowship; Guggenheim Fellowship. MFA: Yale School of Drama; graduate of New Dramatists.



PETER ELDRIDGE, ORIGINAL MUSIC | Peter Eldridge combines all facets of his musical talents into an eclectic mix of performing, recording, composing and producing. He has released three solo recordings - *Decorum*, *Fool No More* and *Stranger in Town*, and he has a new solo album called *Mad Heaven* coming out on Palmetto records in February. He is also a member of the Grammy award-winning vocal group New York Voices, which he co-founded with Darmon Meader. Peter has worked with a diverse and legendary group of artists, among them Bobby McFerrin, Nancy Wilson, George Benson, Patti Austin and Betty Buckley. Peter is currently writing English lyrics for one of

his heroes, Brazilian composer Ivan Lins, and adding his voice to Bobby McFerrin's newest recording project. Visit www.petereldridge.com

CHARACTERS

JANE — Caucasian, thirty-eight

MARRELL — African-American, thirty-eight

TOM — Caucasian, early forties

ALAN — Jewish, forty

JEAN-PIERRE — French, late thirties

GLOSSARY

Achilles

The son of King Peleus and the nymph Thetis, Achilles was a Greek warrior during the Trojan War and the central character in Homer's *Iliad*. His mother sought to make him immortal by dipping him in the River Styx, but his heel, where she held him, was vulnerable. He was killed when a poisoned arrow guided by Apollo struck him in that heel.



Aurora Borealis

Also known as the Northern Lights, the aurora borealis is a display of coloured and white

lights in the night sky, caused by the ionization of atmospheric molecules by solar and cosmic radiation. It is mainly visible in the Arctic region, but can be observed infrequently in the Lower Mainland.



Johann Sebastian Bach

(March 21, 1685-July 28, 1750)

The most famous member of a six-generation family of musicians, Johann Sebastian Bach was one of the most important Baroque

composers and a virtuoso organist and harpsichordist.



Björn

A BabyBjörn is a baby carrier with excellent back support that can be worn like a knapsack on the chest.



John Coltrane

(September 23, 1926-July 17, 1967)

One of the most innovative and influential figures in modern jazz, John Coltrane was a saxophone virtuoso and composer, known for

his "sheets of sound," rapid runs in which individual notes were nearly indistinguishable.

Miles Davis

(May 26, 1926-September 28, 1991)

A jazz trumpeter and bandleader, Miles Davis was at the forefront of several major developments in modern jazz, including bebop, cool jazz, jazz fusion and modal jazz.

Doctors Without Borders

Medecins San Frontieres is an international relief agency that provides emergency medical assistance to those affected by man-made or natural disasters. It was formed in 1971 by a group of French physicians and received the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize.



John Donne

(January 1572-March 31, 1631)

An English metaphysical poet, John Donne was noted for the wit of his secular poetry, his religious verses and treatises, and sermons.

Drambuie

A whisky-based liqueur flavoured with heather honey and herbs, legend has it that Bonnie Prince Charlie gave the original recipe to one of his supporters Captain John MacKinnon, though it wasn't distributed commercially until 1910.



Empire State Building

The tallest building in the world from 1931 to 1972 and named one of the Seven Wonders of the Modern World by the American Society of Civil Engineers, the Empire State

Building is a 102-story office building and tourist attraction in New York City.

Allen Ginsberg

(November 6, 1926-April 5, 1997)

The leading poet of the Beat Generation, Allen Ginsberg was influenced by the free verse poems of Walt Whitman and the writings of his contemporaries Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs. His epic poem "Howl" is a classic work of counterculture, a denunciation of American society in the 1950s.



Hush Puppies

A brand of casual footwear, made from leather or suede and a crepe sole. Hush Puppies were a staple of suburban life in the 1950s and '60s, but made a comeback in the 1990s.

Kaddish

An Aramaic praise to God, recited at the end of synagogue services. A variation of the Kaddish is recited by mourners during the 11-month period of mourning a loved one, and on the anniversary of the death thereafter.



Martin Luther King, Jr.

(January 15, 1929-April 4, 1968)

An American civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., advocated for social change through non-violent methods. He received the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize and was

assassinated by James Earl Ray in 1968.



Malcolm X

(May 19, 1925-February 21, 1965)

A leading spokesman in the Nation of Islam movement, Malcolm X originally denounced the non-violent integrationist policies of the mainstream civil rights movement, but broke with

the Nation of Islam and its policies in 1964. He was assassinated in 1965.

Mishegoss

A Yiddish word meaning craziness or senseless behaviour; also meshugas.

Mnemonist

An individual with the ability to remember and recall unusually long lists of data or perform feats of memory.

Mary Oliver

(September 10, 1935-)

An American poet, Mary Oliver received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1984. Her writing has been influenced by Walt Whitman and Henry David Thoreau and she has also been compared to Emily Dickenson.

Osteoporosis

A condition that is characterized by loss of bone density, resulting in the increased likelihood of fracture, and a decreased ability of bone healing. The incidence of osteoporosis increases significantly in women after menopause, due to a loss of oestrogen.

Patroclus

The beloved companion of the Greek warrior Achilles, Patroclus was killed by Hector when he pursued the Trojan army to the gates of Troy. Achilles retook the field to avenge his death, killing Hector and desecrating his body.

Peace Corps

An American government agency established by President John F. Kennedy in 1961, the Peace Corps was established to provide trained volunteers to help improve living standards in developing nations.

Postpartum depression

Also known as postnatal depression, postpartum depression is a form of clinical depression that primarily affects women after childbirth.

Adrienne Rich

(May 16, 1929-)

One of the most influential poets of the latter half of the 20th century, Adrienne Rich published her first volume of poetry the year she graduated from Radcliffe College. Beginning in the 1960s, her poetry and personal life became increasingly associated with the women's movement.

Schvitz

Sweaty, perspiring. One takes a schvitz in a steam bath.

Sierra Club

The Sierra Club was founded in 1892 to sponsor wilderness outings in the Pacific Coast mountains. It now works to educate the public and lobby on environmental issues.

**Socrates**

An intellectual gadfly in ancient Greece, Socrates (469-399 BC) helped lay the foundation for Western philosophic thought through what has become known as the Socratic method: a series of probing questions

designed to stimulate critical thinking. He was charged with impiety and the corruption of youth and condemned to death by drinking poison.

Wallace Stevens

(October 2, 1879-August 2, 1955)

An American poet, Wallace Stevens practiced law before joining an insurance company, where he rose

to the position of vice president. He published his first book of poetry in 1923, but wasn't considered a major poet until late in his life. He didn't receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry until the final year of his life.

Triple Sec

A liqueur made from the peels of sweet and bitter oranges, Triple Sec is a variety of Curacao first distilled in France in 1834.

Troy

An ancient city in modern-day Turkey near the mouth of the Dardanelles, Troy is famous as the site of the Trojan War. According to legend, it was besieged by the Greeks for ten years before being captured and destroyed. The ruins were discovered by Heinrich Schliemann in 1871 and are now a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Desmond Tutu

(October 7, 1931-)

Recipient of the 1984 Nobel Prize for Peace for his nonviolent work against apartheid, Desmond Tutu became the first black archbishop of Cape Town in 1986 and head of South Africa's Anglican Church. He chaired the Truth and Reconciliation commission after the fall of apartheid.

Verklemt

A Yiddish word meaning overcome with emotion.

Wainscoting

Wooden paneling used to line the walls of a room.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

The **Vancouver Playhouse Theatre Company** is British Columbia's premier regional theatre company, producing engaging plays of the highest calibre since **1962**. Our mandate, as it has evolved with the region's cultural needs, is to be a vital cultural leader in the theatre ecology, describing and shaping our community's perspectives by engaging a wider audience in significant theatre experiences. We fulfill our mission by: 1) Producing first-class theatrical productions of contemporary and modern classical work that engage the greater Vancouver community; providing significant social-cultural experiences for audiences and new and graduate opportunities for artistic expression; 2) Developing new Canadian work that reflects the changing face and perspectives of our community; supporting emerging artists and organizations in the realization of associated and independent productions; 3) Deepening the connection between the audience and the art form through education and outreach

We ask that you note the following guidelines to help keep the theatre experience an enjoyable one for all.

THEATRE ETIQUETTE FOR ALL AGES

Thou shalt not arrive late.

This is an insult to performers and annoying to those who arrive on time.

Thou shall sit in your assigned seat.

When in doubt, speak with an usher or refer to your admission ticket.

Thou shalt not talk during the performance.

You're not at home watching television.

Thou shalt not rattle candy wrappers.

Sound effects for this production have been chosen by the designers.

Thou shalt not "sing along" with the performers.

Save that for after the show.

Thou shalt not consume food or drinks inside the auditorium.

Performers can hear you just as much as you can hear them.

Thou shalt not place feet on the seat in front, or tap out a rhythm.

The back of the seat in front does not belong to you.

Thou shalt not go "to and fro" from thy seat during the performance.

This disrupts the show for everyone.

Thou shall turn off all that goes beep, ring or buzz.

Accompaniment is provided by the orchestra only.

Thou shall turn off all texting devices.

We love to twitter, facebook or blog, too, but save it for before or after the performance.

[VISIT VANCOUVERPLAYHOUSE.COM/BLOG](http://VISITVANCOUVERPLAYHOUSE.COM/BLOG)

[BEFORE OR AFTER THE PERFORMANCE]

PLAYHOUSE EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

NEW! AUDIO DESCRIBED PERFORMANCES are part of EarSighted, a season of audio described theatre provided by [Kickstart Disability Arts and Culture](#), made possible with assistance from Canadian Heritage and the City of Vancouver. Audio description begins 15 min. prior to curtain. ***This:* Jan. 21, 2011.**

PRODUCTION CENTRE TOURS As a group, you can book a complimentary guided tour of the 25,000 square foot Production Centre and explore scenery and prop shops, the wardrobe department and rehearsal halls. We recently moved into a new facility on East 2nd Ave., which will be our home until 2011. **Call 604 637 3094.**

E-STAGE: PLAYHOUSE YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS 2010 High school students from across British Columbia collaborate with professional directors and playwrights to develop an eight-minute scene, which is then performed by professional actors on the Playhouse stage. Email submissions are preferred. **For more information contact Meredith Elliott at 604 629 2097 or melliott@vancouverplayhouse.com.**

TALKBACKS An excellent way to enhance your experience as actors return to stage to offer insights on the show and their work. Select Monday and Tuesday evening performances. ***This:* Jan. 17, 25, 2011.**

SALON SATURDAY Informative and fun, Salon Saturday is presented in the Playhouse Salon at 1pm (show at 2pm). This series brings the audience together with a notable speaker to explore some of the underlying themes of the play that follows. Held on the third Saturday of each production. ***This:* Jan. 22, 2011.**

PAY-WHAT-YOU-CAN MATINEE This matinee is instrumental in bringing live, professional theatre to everyone in our community regardless of income level. ***This:* Jan. 15, 2011.**

RUSH TICKETS Available 15 minutes before show time and subject to availability, rush tickets are only \$20 for regular performances and \$30 for the season's musical.

PREVIEWS Be the first! We stage four preview performances (not yet media-reviewed), which offer dramatic savings on regular tickets (preview tickets: \$32-\$41). ***This:* Jan. 8, 10, 11, 12, 2011.**

TEA MATINEES These lively matinees are extremely popular, especially with seniors and students. Tea, coffee and biscuits (complimentary) are served at 1pm; show at 2pm. ***This:* Jan. 19, 26, 27, 2011.**

RENTALS In addition to our own production work, we share our rehearsal halls and props and costume inventory with our community. **604 872 6622. Rehearsal: ext. # 224. Prop: ext. # 236. Costume: ext. # 320.**

VANCOUVERPLAYHOUSE.COM

Send us feedback and questions regarding our Play Guides | Request a copy of a script (for educational purposes)

Contact: Stasa Andric at **604 637 3094** / sandric@vancouverplayhouse.com

or Meredith Elliott at **604 629 2097** / melliott@vancouverplayhouse.com

SEE YOU AT THE PLAYHOUSE!

ALL PERFORMANCES AT HAMILTON & DUNSMUIR

2010/2011 SEASON PRODUCTIONS

THE FANTASTICKS

OCT. 2-23, 2010

Book and Lyrics by Tom Jones

Music by Harvey Schmidt

Directed and Choreographed by Max Reimer

Co-Sponsored by:

[Leith Wheeler Investment Counsel Ltd.](#)



NOËL COWARD'S BRIEF ENCOUNTER

NOV. 27-DEC. 26, 2010

Adapted for the stage by Emma Rice

Directed by Max Reimer

A co-production with Manitoba Theatre Centre

Sponsored by:

[The Great-West Life Assurance Company](#)



THIS

JAN. 8-29, 2011

Written by Melissa James Gibson

DEATH OF A SALESMAN

FEB. 12-MAR. 5, 2011

Written by Arthur Miller

Directed by John Cooper

THE TRESPASSERS

MAR. 26-APR. 16, 2011

Written by Morris Panych

Directed by Ron Jenkins

A co-production with The Belfry Theatre, Victoria

Sponsored by:

[Hyphen Communications Inc.](#)



SPECIAL PRESENTATION

MACHOMER

MAY 11-16, 2011

Created and Performed by Rick Miller

Directed by Sean Lynch

A WYRD Production

Sponsored by:

[TELUS](#)

