

CU ★ PRESENTS

2020-21 Season
Digital program



Theatre & Dance
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Contents

Click on an item to navigate to its page.

**In *Appropriate*, America grapples
with its ghosts ★**

Performance program

CU Presents Digital

Coming up at CU Theatre & Dance

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In *Appropriate*, America **grapples** with its **ghosts**

By Becca Vaclavik

appropriate

adj.

1. suitable or fitting for a particular purpose, person, occasion, etc.
2. belonging to or peculiar to a person; proper.

v.

1. to set apart, authorize, or legislate for some specific purpose or use
2. to take to or for oneself; take possession of
3. to take without permission or consent; seize; expropriate
4. to steal, especially to commit petty theft.

How is the American experience defined? Who defines it and what are its histories? These are questions playwright Branden Jacobs-Jenkins found himself digging into when he noticed how differently stories about White families and Black families are

critically received. Speaking to BOMB Magazine in 2018, **Jacobs-Jenkins said:**

“... Nobody calls *A Raisin in the Sun* or *The Piano Lesson* family dramas—they’re plays about the ‘Black experience in America.’ So I read all those ‘American family’ plays and started thinking about the way whiteness was being encoded. Like, how might I read these plays as being about the ‘white experience in America?’ ... I wanted to write a self-consciously ‘American family drama.’ ... I had this impulse to see what would happen if I made blackness present but essentially invisible.”

The result was his work *Appropriate*—whether pronounced ap·PRO·priate or appropri·ATE· is intentionally vague; both definitions are present on the opening pages of the script—a play about a White family unpacking their family’s dilapidated Arkansas plantation in the wake of their patriarch’s death. It is “classic” American family drama. But it’s also brimming with more, through its double meanings in the text and cultural iconography.

“I like that something can look like one thing, but mean two different things,” **said Jacobs-Jenkins** in

an interview with Vogue. “Language is really unstable in that way.”

Heather Kelley, who serves as the production’s dramaturg as well as a cast member, encourages audiences to listen for how the characters discuss ownership—of the property, of people—as well as how ghosts, both literal and figurative, are present in the play.

“This play asks who’s *not* there on stage—whose story is not being told, whose story is not being privileged—in a very deliberate and meaningful way,” said Kelley. “How often—when people think of an American family—are we picturing a White one? And what does that mean? How can we begin to unpack and challenge that in all forms?”

“[As White cast and audience members,] we have a responsibility to know as much as we can about this history and grapple with its ongoing perpetuation and legacy, rather than rest in our privilege.”

*The Department of Theatre & Dance production of **Appropriate** is available to stream at cupresents.org from April 23-30, 2021. Virtual tickets start at \$7.*

Appropriate

A play by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

April 23-30, 2021

Director	Cecilia J. Pang
Stage Manager	Wessie Simmons
Video/Sound Production	Zachary Andrews*
Costume Designer	Joe Kennedy
Scenic Consultant	Markas Henry
Props Designer/ Scenic Consultant	Hannah Male
Dramaturg	Heather Kelley
Assistant Dramaturg	Isabella Jones

Please note: This production contains adult language and explores themes of racial violence.

** The Department of Theatre & Dance is grateful to donor Roe Green for making our 2020-21 theatre season possible during these challenging times. We are thrilled to welcome videographer Zachary Andrews as a 2020-21 Roe Green Visiting Theatre Artist, enabling us to record and stream this production.*

APPROPRIATE is presented by special arrangement with Dramatists Play Service, Inc., New York.

New York Premiere originally produced by
Signature Theatre, New York City
(James Houghton, Founding Artistic Director; Erika Mallin, Executive Director)

World premiere production in the 2013 Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville and at the Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago, IL (Chay Yew, Artistic Director; Chris Mannelli, Interim Managing Director)
APPROPRIATE, recipient of the Sundance Institute Tennessee Williams Award, was developed, in part, at the 2011 Sundance Institute Playwrights Retreat at UCross Foundation and at the 2012 Sundance Institute Theatre Lab at the Sundance Resort
with the Sundance Institute / Time Warner Fellowship Program

APPROPRIATE was developed, in part, at Vineyard Arts Project (Ashley Melone, Founder and Artistic Director)

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Special Thanks

- Branden Jacobs-Jenkins
- Center for Humanities and the Arts Small Grant Program
- Roser Mini-Grant Award
- Department of Theatre & Dance's Arts and Cultural Enrichment Grant
- Derek Zasky and William Morris Endeavor

Cast

ROLE

Toni Lafayette

Rhys Thurston

Bo Lafayette

Racheal Kramer-Lafayette

Cassidy Kramer- Lafayette

Ainsley Kramer-Lafayette

Franz Lafayette

River Rayney

NAME

Heather Kelley*

Kyle Lawrence

Chip Persons*

Samantha Piel

Rita DiSibio

Rory Persons

Troy Coleman

Sarah Powers

UNDERSTUDIES

Toni Lafayette

Rhys Thurston

Bo Lafayette

Racheal Kramer-Lafayette

Cassidy Kramer- Lafayette

Ainsley Kramer-Lafayette

Franz Lafayette

River Rayney

Darcy Brander

Caleb Stuart

Grant Bowman

Lucinda Lazo

Brie Musser

Rory Persons

Cameron Hazlip

Jo Hoagland

** Appears by permission of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.*

Setting

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *Appropriate* takes place over the course of one desperately hot weekend in southeastern Arkansas in the cluttered living room of the Lafayette family home, a former plantation house. Six months before the play begins, Ray Lafayette—the family patriarch, and a recluse in his final years—dies after an extended illness, leaving his eldest child Antoinette (“Toni”) in charge of his estate. This estate includes the house, packed to the gills with five generations’ worth of accumulated junk, and the property it sits on, which encompasses two graveyards: the gated cemetery of the white Lafayettes’ slave-owning forebears, and the unmarked burial ground of their countless Black slaves.

When the play begins, Toni and her teenage son Rhys have just arrived from Atlanta to oversee the auction of her deceased father’s house and its contents. Toni’s oldest brother, Beauregarde (“Bo”), is expected to fly in and join them the following day from New York, with his wife Rachael and two young children, Cassidy and Ainsley, in tow. Toni and Bo’s youngest brother, François (“Frank”), is not

anticipated, having dropped off the grid ten years earlier after struggling with addiction. In the play's opening moments, we hear the sounds of hundreds of cicadas, large grasshopper-like insects who emerge from the ground every thirteen years.

Dramaturg's note

While initially developed a decade ago and first professionally produced in 2015, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *Appropriate* could not be more timely. A ferociously funny and absolutely devastating indictment of white supremacy told by a Black playwright with an all-white cast, *Appropriate* seems to speak directly to our current moment: the glaring racial disparities highlighted and exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, the alarming rise in racist rhetoric and white nationalism, and the incomprehensible violence directed at bodies of color, from George Floyd to Breonna Taylor to the victims of the Atlanta-area spas, and so many others.

Sitting in their late father's living room, squabbling over the family estate—a former plantation, whose property once included human beings—the Lafayette

children are in denial about their family's past, but also refuse to see the ways in which that "past" is actually the present and future. In this play, Black characters are deliberately absent, a choice that dares the audience to acknowledge all of the other spaces, onstage and in real life, where Blackness is rendered silent and invisible. The Lafayette family may be haunted, literally and figuratively, by the slaves buried unceremoniously on their property, but they're not the only Americans reckoning with slavery's ghosts.

CU Theatre & Dance Production team

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Kevin Rich

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

Constance Lane

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Jordan Feeler

MASTER ELECTRICIAN & VIRTUAL TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Cooper Braun-Enos

ASSISTANT VIRTUAL TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Logan Wallace

NON-EQUITY DEPUTY

Rita DiSibio

COSTUMES

Costume Shop production assistants:

Mari Beazley, Darcy Brander, Kaylyn, Buehler, Celeste Fenton, Sarah Jeffers, Joe Kennedy, Victor Longman, Graham Longworth, Emily Ray, Winnie Wenger. **Practicum students:** Matthias Bolon, Stephanie Castro-Rivera, Evan Cerda, Rachel Fields, Zoe Fischhoff, Eric Gaydon, Cameron Hazlip, Grace Kohler, Sabrina Mason, Sophia Morris, Kinari Rima

SCENERY AND ELECTRICS

Scene shop production assistants:

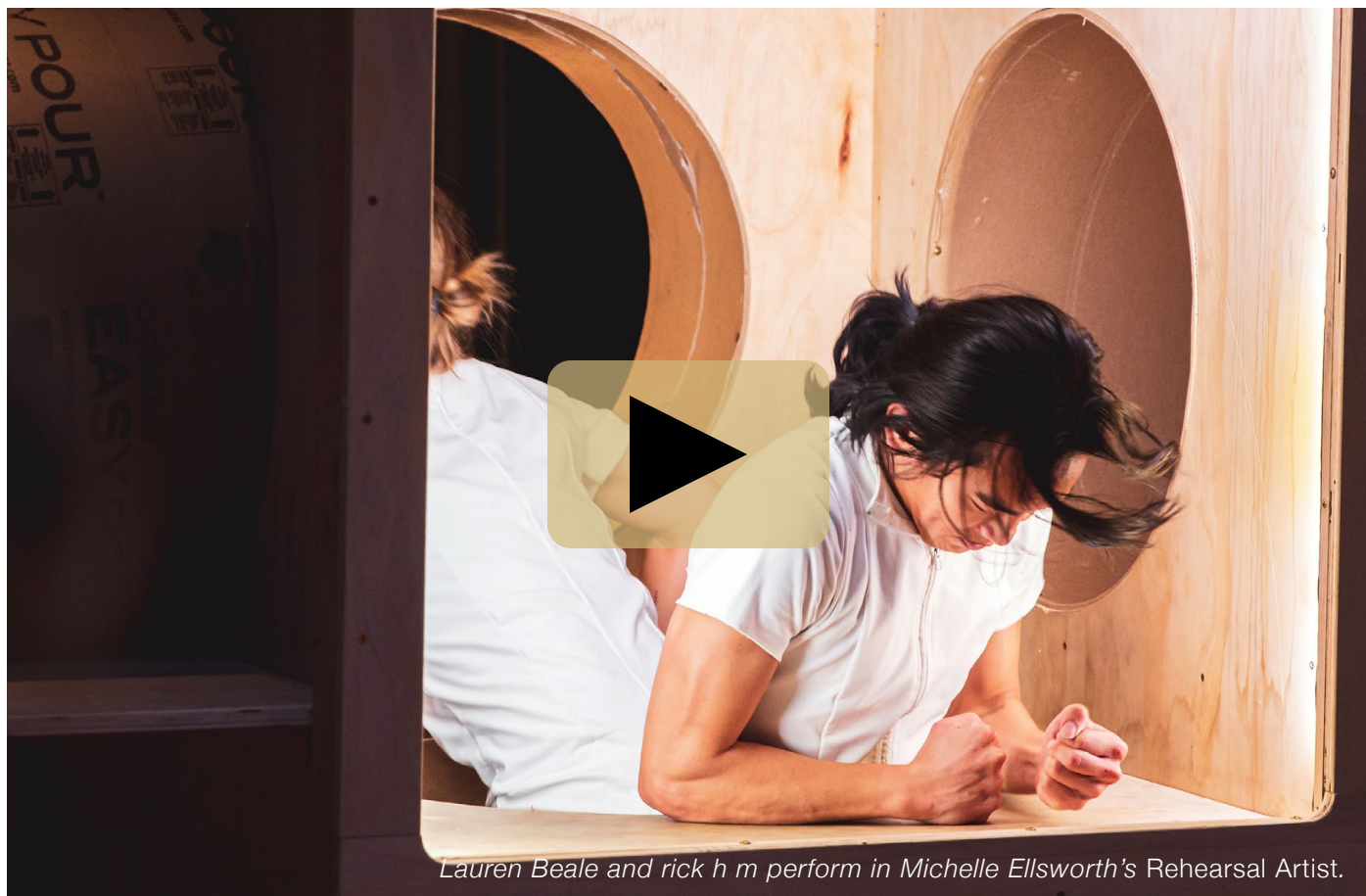
Stephanie Castro-Rivera, Peri Cooper, Aleighya Dawkins, Asher Farr, Rachael Fields, Cali Greenbaum, Nikky Haabestad, Aiden Heydt, Ari

Kutzer, Kyle Lawrence, Calvin Logan, Hannah Male, Edwin McArthur, Sam Morin, Vik Padilla, Hayley Parnell, Connor Robertson, Kelsea Sibold, Logan Wallace, Madelyn Wible, Destin Woods. **Production Practicum students:** Matthias Bolon, Kaylyn Buehler, Natalie Connelly, Claudia Davis, Jo Hoagland, Greta Hooston, Clara Hoppe, Isabella Jones, Mimi Kuntz, Maya Owens, Hayley Parnell, Emily Ray, Taylor Rivet, Connor Robertson, Stephanie Talder. **Lighting Practicum students:** Darcy Brander, Lexi Brooker, Christian Castañeda, Evan Cerda, Rita DiSibio, Bennet Forsyth, Eric Gaydon, Victoria Harbison, Aidan Heydt, Greta Hooston, Wesley Juels, Mimi Kuntz, Maya Owens, Lauren Perlis, Marianne Pettis, Connor Robertson, Stephanie Talde

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A play by William Shakespeare

Premiering March 12

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Premiering April 2

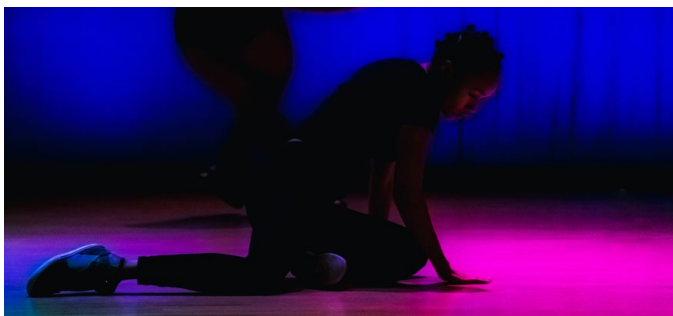
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2020-21 New Play Festival

Premiering April 15

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Open Space

Curated by CU Dance Connection

April 22-30

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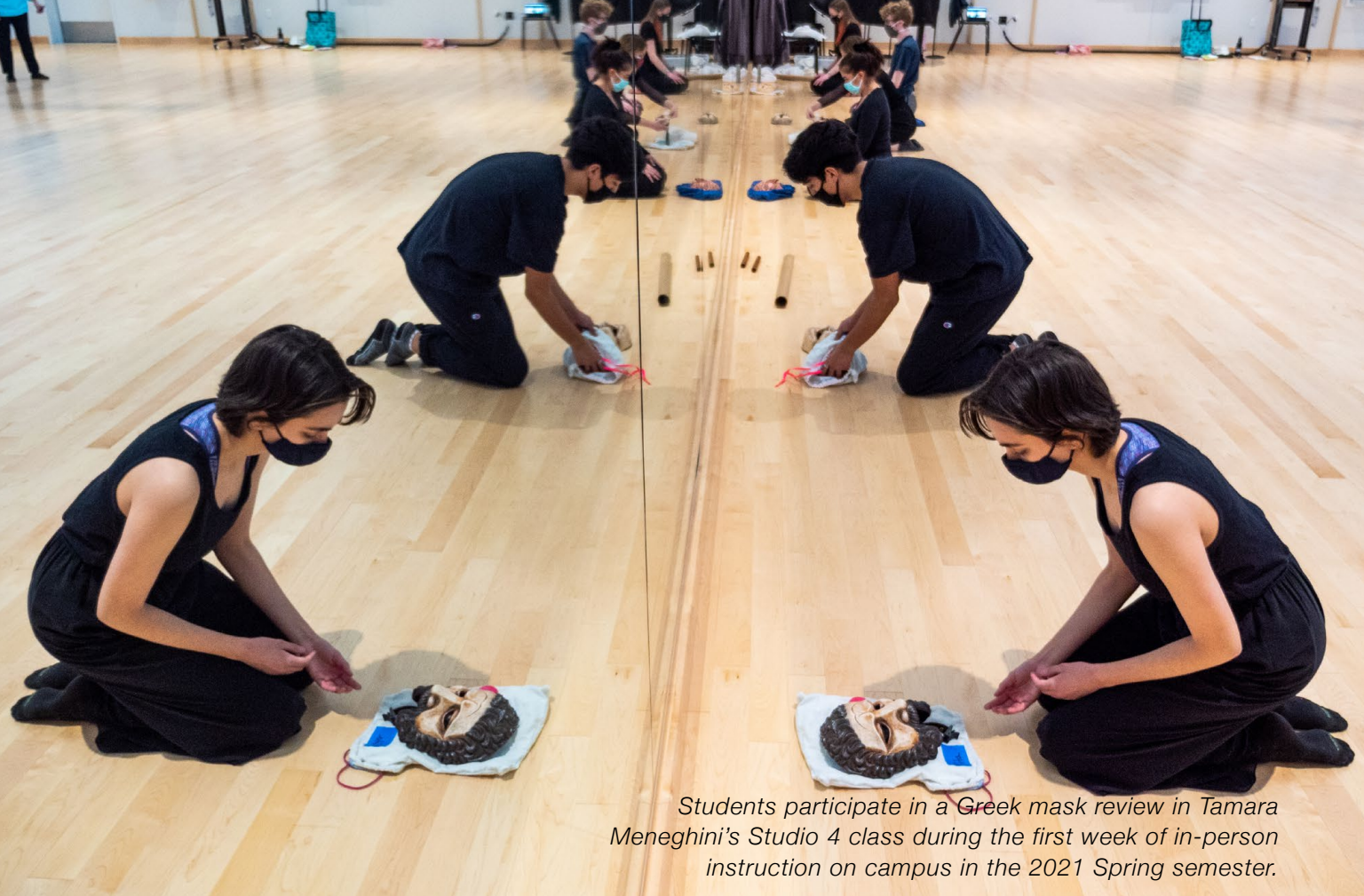


Appropriate

A play by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

April 23-30

[Learn more](#)



Students participate in a Greek mask review in Tamara Meneghini's Studio 4 class during the first week of in-person instruction on campus in the 2021 Spring semester.

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Dance Video Recording/Archivist
rick h m

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2020-21 Digital Programs

March-May 2021

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