

ROYAL
COURT

BACKGROUND PACK



ROYAL COURT THEATRE PRODUCTIONS, SONIA FRIEDMAN PRODUCTIONS, OLD VIC PRODUCTIONS,
ERIC ABRAHAM
PRESENT

CLYBOURNE PARK

BY

Bruce Norris

DIRECTED BY

Dominic Cooke

WYNDHAM'S THEATRE

A DELFONT MACKINTOSH THEATRE

FROM 28 JANUARY FOR 12 WEEKS ONLY

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Welcome

Welcome to the Background Pack to accompany the production of *Clybourne Park* by Bruce Norris. We hope you find it useful both for preparing your students for their visit to the production at the Wyndham's Theatre and for your discussions and practical work afterwards. The pack contains information about the production, the context of the play, and some suggestions for practical exercises. These can be used for drama, literature, citizenship, history and geography sessions. There are also further action links to encourage students to make connections with other plays and literature which treat similar ideas to those explored in *Clybourne Park*.

Following critical acclaim and a sell out run, Bruce Norris' satirical comedy *Clybourne Park* transfers from the Jerwood Theatre Downstairs at the Royal Court to the Wyndham's Theatre in the West End. *Clybourne Park* is the latest transfer from the Royal Court, after successes with both *ENRON* and *Jerusalem* in 2010.

In 1959 Russ and Bev are selling their desirable two-bed at a knock-down price. This enables the first black family to move into the neighbourhood, creating ripples of discontent amongst the cosy white urbanites of *Clybourne Park*. In 2009, the same property is being bought by Lindsey and Steve whose plans to raze the house and start again is met with a similar response. Are the issues festering beneath the floorboards actually the same fifty years on?

Bruce Norris' hilarious play explores the fault line between race and property.

The production contains explicit language with sexual and racist references. This pack has avoided that wherever possible but you should make your students aware that Bruce Norris has chosen consciously to explore and challenge racist and sexist attitudes and, in order to do that, asks the audience to confront some uncomfortable truths about the way people used to live and still think.

Clybourne Park was first produced on Broadway in 2009 and was first produced in the UK in 2010 at the Royal Court directed by Artistic Director, Dominic Cooke. The play received a number of awards including the Evening Standard Best Play Award, South Bank Sky Arts Theatre Award and Critics Circle Best Play Awards.

'Genius' *The Times*

'Norris's play nails the thorny subject of race relations with a bilious zest that takes one's breath away' *Guardian*

Contains very strong language
Running time 2hrs including one interval
Produced by Royal Court Theatre Productions,
Sonia Friedman Productions, Old Vic
Productions, Eric Abraham.

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All quotes are from the published text *Clybourne Park* by Bruce Norris, Nick Hern Books with kind permission of the author.



Production Credits

CAST

Russ / Dan	Stuart McQuarrie
Bev / Kathy	Sophie Thompson
Francine / Lena	Lorna Brown
Jim / Tom	Sam Spruell
Albert / Kevin	Lucian Msamati
Karl / Steve	Stephen Campbell Moore
Betsey / Lindsey	Sarah Goldberg
Kenneth	Michael Goldsmith

CREATIVE TEAM

Writer	Bruce Norris
Director	Dominic Cooke
Designer	Robert Innes-Hopkins
Lighting Designer	Paule Constable
Sound Designer	David McSeveney
Associate Lighting Designer	Stephen (Steve) Andrews
Assistant Director	Kate Hewitt

PRODUCTION TEAM

Production Manager	Matt Drury
Company Stage Manager	Nafeesah Butt
Deputy Stage Manager	Lorna Seymour
Assistant Stage	Katie Hutcheson
Dialect/Voice Coach	Penny Dyer
Fight Director	Bret Yount
Vocal Coach	Jessica Higgs
ASL Tuition	Oliver Pouliot

Understudies

Francine/Lena	Nicola Alexis
Albert/Kevin	Mensah Bediako
Betsy / Lindsey and Bev / Kathy	Sarah Desmond
Karl / Steve and Russ / Dan	Cory Peterson

For the Royal Court

Artistic Director	Dominic Cooke
Executive Director	Kate Horton
Producer	Vanessa Stone
Head of Communications	Kym Bartlett
Education Associate	Lynne Gagliano
Resource materials	Rebecca Manson Jones
Production Assistant	David Nock

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Bruce Norris

The Royal Court Theatre is known as a theatre where writers are central to the process of commissioning and producing new drama for the stage. Artistic Director Dominic Cooke chose to work with Bruce Norris on the first UK production of *The Pain* and the *Itch* as Dominic's first production as Artistic Director. Clybourne Park is their second collaboration. In between attending rehearsals, we asked Bruce a few questions about writing for stage and working at the Royal Court.



- **Where did the idea of recreating Karl Lindner and the characters of Lorraine Hansberry's play as off-stage shadows come from?**

A Raisin in the Sun was one of the first important American plays I was exposed to – via the movie – and it wasn't long after that experience that I started working as a child actor. I was fascinated by how plays work, not only structurally but also with sets, costumes, and so forth. The Hansberry play is so solidly built a play that it was a good starting point. My problem, though, was that since I was a privileged little white boy in Houston, Texas, I didn't have any easy way to relate to the characters... except the character of Karl, the antagonist. At the same time, as I became an actor I quickly found that the best parts, perversely, are always the ones that arouse the audience's negative reactions. So, since my access to the story of Raisin was only through the side door, so to speak, I thought it would be interesting to allow this character to escape from the play, like a refugee, and run off to drop in on another story – one intimately connected with A Raisin in the Sun.



- **Did you work alone or do you discuss ideas with friends and colleagues?**

I always write alone, and never show anything or discuss it in detail with anyone until I have a relatively solid draft.

- **You've trained and worked as an actor before turning to writing. How do you think that training has helped or influenced how you write for stage?**

I guess I'd say that it means that I always work from situations – placing characters in situations that are – for whatever reason – uncomfortable. As an actor you're always looking for what a character is trying to achieve at a given moment and what the obstacles to achieving it are, and that's what I try to create in setting up a story. Also, I always wanted to be an improv actor

but was never confident enough to do so, so writing plays is, I suppose, a safer way of improvising multiple characters and then simply transcribing what I imagine they'd do or say.

- **Do you think you would always have been a "political" or socially engaged writer or do you think that the particular times we live in have compelled you to write/choose these subjects?**

I'm not really sure I am politically or socially engaged, (by which I mean, I don't think that plays lead to political change of any profound kind). I often write about people within a given political milieu (or affected by one), because I find the questions raised to be interesting to me personally. But I certainly don't think that the plays I write foment change, but I do like to ask myself why we believe certain things about ourselves, politically speaking, usually self-flattering things. But that's just part of my argumentative nature. So I think I probably would be the same kind of writer no matter what political era I was born into.

- **Something I particularly like about the play is that it doesn't tell us what to think – and anytime you might think "oh I agree with him/her" something else happens to question it. How did you manage to get yourself into so many heads at once? Is this the actor background coming through again?**

Yeah, again, it's multiple improvisation, and a deep aversion to preaching to people. Whenever people come to hear "politics" in the theatre it is inevitably to reconfirm their pre-existing beliefs and pat themselves on the back – which for me is not that interesting.



- **Are you asking the actors to keep an awareness of time pressure or has the running time worked out organically?**

I don't know. I've written some plays that are much longer and other short ones – this one is just conveniently 2 hours.

- **Your comedy has been likened to that of Edward Albee. Do you give that much credence? And did you set out with that in mind? Who are your influences in theatre?**

I actually didn't know many of Albee's plays until about ten years ago – in fact, I still don't know the majority of them. I think he's a wonderful writer but I'd say other writers had greater influence on me: Wallace Shawn, Joe Orton, even Monty Python.

- **There are a lot of laughs in the play – but is it a comedy? Do you want audiences to take anything else from it?**

Without trying to sound too precious – I think a play is whatever it is. We don't ask whether a book or a painting is a comedy or a tragedy – those are just some categories that a critic named Aristotle made up. And I think people take away whatever they put in – I've had a more profound experience watching certain Bugs Bunny cartoons than I have at some Shakespeare plays.

- **What's your favourite moment in the writing/rehearsal process? What's the dullest thing about writing a play?**

The favourite moment is when you print out the first complete draft of a new play. The dullest thing is listening to your own internal critic punishing you and telling you that it's no good.

- **The Royal Court is famously a writers' theatre. How involved have you been in rehearsals? What do you gain from being there and what do you contribute?**

I'm a completely impossible, obsessive, autocratic control freak. Usually the director has to pry me out of the rehearsal room with a crowbar. But once the play is up and everything is running according to my satisfaction then I'm able to walk away. It's fairly perverse, though, to go into theatre if you have a controlling nature, for it will NEVER be fully within your control. As to whether my contribution is valuable, you'd have to ask the directors or actors.

- **This is your second collaboration with Dominic Cooke and the Royal Court. What does Dominic bring to your plays that is perhaps different from American directors? Were there any advantages or extra pressures working with him the second time?**

Dominic is incredibly meticulous and tireless – qualities I value enormously. He's also very tolerant of my presence for which I'm grateful. All directors are different but, again, I think it has more to do with their individual personalities than it has to do with any English or American "style". This time around I was present for much more of rehearsal than I was for *The Pain* and *the Itch*. The results were very good in both cases, but I think it saved time for us to have access to each other throughout the process (as we did this time, rather than just coming and going). That was Dominic's idea and I think it was a good one.

Synopsis

ACT ONE

1959 – A house in Clybourne Park, Chicago – A hot Saturday afternoon between 3 – 4pm

RUSS is eating Neapolitan ice cream, sitting on the sofa in his pyjamas listening to a transistor radio. Around him is the chaos of moving: packed and half-packed boxes. His wife, BEV, is busy packing with the help of FRANCINE, their black maid, who is wearing a uniform. BEV gives FRANCINE instructions about being careful with the packing. She offers FRANCINE a dish which she no longer wants. Francine clearly doesn't want the dish either. She declines despite BEV's continued urging.

BEV and RUSS have a discussion about the derivation of the word Neapolitan which leads them into an awkward conversation about "the Wheeler boy" who works in the local grocery store and has Down's Syndrome. BEV turns the conversation into a discussion about RUSS's sense of humour and how he is being missed at the local Rotarians meetings. It seems that RUSS is depressed and BEV is running out of ways to cope with it. The atmosphere is broken by a telephone call answered by FRANCINE. It is KARL LINDNER from the Rotarians. He wants to drop by. They try to put him off but he is insistent.

JIM, a youngish pastor arrives. The three joke about the Neapolitan ice cream. FRANCINE attempts to interject that she has to leave by 3.30pm. BEV is annoyed because she wants Francine to move a trunk. RUSS insists that he will move the trunk. JIM excuses himself from lifting on account of an injury. BEV goes into the kitchen to make drinks and JIM tries to engage RUSS in conversation. The new house is in a suburb out of town near RUSS's new office. They will have a lot more space and no more commute for RUSS. JIM attempts to dig beyond the superficial, first asking about RUSS's and then BEV's welfare. JIM suggests to RUSS that perhaps sufficient time has passed (2 years) since the death of their son, KENNETH, for RUSS to shake off his grief. He reminds RUSS that whatever happened later, KENNETH was and always would be "a hero to his country." RUSS tells JIM to mind his own business using strong language. BEV returns and is appalled.

She attempts to get RUSS to apologise but he won't. He calls JIM a coward and goes upstairs to change. JIM tries to leave but Francine's husband ALBERT arrives to collect FRANCINE. JIM doesn't know whether to invite the black man into BEV's home or not. BEV invites him in out of the heat. ALBERT stays near the door. JIM and BEV continue their conversation as if ALBERT is not there. RUSS has been sitting up all night.

FRANCINE appears ready to leave. It becomes clear that Francine has been working on what is usually her day off. BEV again mentions to FRANCINE about the footlocker trunk to be moved from upstairs. ALBERT offers to deal with it and although FRANCINE does not want to, the couple go upstairs.

BEV attempts to apologise for RUSS but is interrupted by the arrival of KARL LINDNER. JIM tries to leave again but KARL asks him to stay. BEV also invites in BETSY, Karl's heavily pregnant wife, to avoid the heat of waiting in the car. KARL goes out to get BETSY from the car and RUSS now dressed in a fresh shirt appears on the stairs and goes into the kitchen without speaking. BETSY is profoundly deaf and uses a mix of sign, lipreading and notes to communicate. BEV is very welcoming but talks to BETSY as she would a child. BEV offers everyone iced tea and she and BETSY go to the kitchen to prepare it.

RUSS joins the men. The atmosphere is tense and becomes more so as Karl explains the reason for his visit. Clybourne Park is a white community. Karl has found out that BEV's and RUSS's house has been sold to a black family from another neighbourhood. Some members of the Community Association have decided to try and stop this by discouraging the black family. Karl has just returned from meeting the black family and he has come to ask BEV and RUSS to cancel the sale. BEV doesn't see the problem and exposes the hypocrisy underlying the values of the Rotarians, the Community Association and of JIM, the minister's, faith. KARL dismisses BEV's opinion as a woman and addresses himself to RUSS.



ALBERT appears wishing to speak to BEV. A noise is heard upstairs as the footlocker crashes down the stairs. RUSS gets up and goes to the basement. KARL now attempts to bring ALBERT and FRANCINE onto his side of the debate about people living amongst their own kind but BEV claims that she and FRANCINE are friends. KARL persists in his track about people from different backgrounds living in different ways.

RUSS rejoins the company carrying his work gloves. He seems calmer – he reminds KARL that the house is sold. KARL reveals that the Rotarians/Community Association have raised the funds to attempt to pay off the black family and prevent them from disturbing the status quo in Clybourne Park but the black family have turned down his offer. KARL has one more legal loophole to propose to get RUSS and BEV out of their commitment but when that fails, he paints a picture of how the arrival of this family will spell a general decline of the neighbourhood. RUSS attempts to silence KARL and asks him to leave. The church clock strikes four. KARL angered by being told to leave and by being silenced likens the situation to a communist state.

He insinuates that the buyers perhaps don't know the circumstances surrounding the sale of the house and can only afford it because it has been sold so cheaply. He implies he might tell the buyers the story as part of his responsibility to the community. RUSS admits he doesn't care about the community which would not give KENNETH a job after what he had done became public. BEV tries to deny that her son was guilty of participation in war atrocity but RUSS angrily tells her to face the truth. RUSS reads from KENNETH'S suicide note.

JIM suggests they take a moment to pray but RUSS has had enough of him and threatens violence. ALBERT manages to restore order but RUSS will not tolerate him putting his hands on him. FRANCINE criticises ALBERT for getting involved. She goes out to the car. KARL accuses RUSS of being mentally unstable as he helps JIM out of the house and joins BETSY who has run to the car. RUSS takes the footlocker and drags it into the kitchen. BEV attempts to pay ALBERT for helping with the trunk. When he refuses she urges the chafing dish on him which he also refuses, saying they don't need BEV's things. "We got our own things". BEV is shocked for a moment. ALBERT offers his condolences about KENNETH. BEV tries to make a speech about races living alongside each other but she does not have the words. ALBERT leaves. She is left alone. RUSS returns to get a shovel.

They discuss burying the trunk under the crepe myrtle tree in the back garden. RUSS apologises for losing his temper. They talk about the new place in Glen Meadow. BEV wonders what she will do all day without her community around her. They both consider this for the first time.

ACT TWO

2009 – THE SAME SETTING AS ACT ONE – A HOT SATURDAY AFTERNOON in September between 3 – 4pm

STEVE and LINDSEY (white) who are buying the house, with KATHY (white), a lawyer, sit opposite KEVIN and LENA (black) from the Owners' Association and TOM (white) an estate agent and local resident. They are sitting on improvised furniture in the sitting room of the same house 50 years later. They are all dressed smartly but casually. LINDSEY is pregnant. They are studying photocopies of architectural drawings and legal documents. TOM, an estate agent, grandson of the estate agent who sold the house in 1959, brings them to focus and tries to chair the discussion. STEVE and LINDSEY have recently bought the house and want to refurbish the property by knocking it down and building a new and extended property. This has caused concern amongst local residents who have signed a petition to ask for the area to become a conservation zone. LENA and her husband KEVIN represent the Owners' Association. KATHY representing STEVE and LINDSEY, and TOM are seeking to establish the rights both of the existing residents and the buyers.

KATHY is called away by a call on her mobile from HECTOR the architect. Whilst they wait, LINDSEY and STEVE say how much they both love the neighbourhood and can't wait to move in from GLEN MEADOW where the commute into town is eroding STEVE'S soul. STEVE and KEVIN establish that they work a few streets from each other and know friends or colleagues in common. LINDSEY takes over from KATHY on the phone and the off-stage HECTOR'S personality is summed up stereotypically as being to do with his Spanish ancestry. KATHY makes small talk about a trip to Spain and Morocco into which LENA who has not yet spoken intercedes to try and make a point on behalf of the residents. STEVE puts her off until they are all back in the conversation because he wants things said only once. TOM wants to leave by 4pm.

LINDSEY apologises for the length of the call and the others have moved onto a new section of the paperwork. They get sidetracked onto a debate about the capital of Morocco. DAN, a builder enters and waits. LENA takes her chance to speak, KEVIN reminds her she doesn't need their permission and she says she doesn't like to interrupt people. LINDSEY excuses her tendency to talk too much blaming her Irish heritage. KATHY makes a joke about her husband and his ability to talk because he is half-Jewish, half Italian. Introductions are made again. LENA is named after her aunt.

DAN interrupts asking for STEVE. He is digging a trench and taking out a tree which is dead. STEVE goes out with DAN to look at the problem.

The others continue discussing the plans for the new building. The controversy surrounds its height which is out of keeping with the other buildings in the area. KATHY starts to become quite aggressive with TOM about her clients' rights to build the taller structure claiming that objections should have been raised earlier in the process. LINDSEY offers that they did consider renovating the existing property but that financially it makes more sense to demolish and start again. TOM, ignoring the continual ringing of his mobile, says he has to listen to the Owners' Association who are ALL objecting to the fact that the new house will be 15 feet taller than the ones nearby.

TOM can ignore his mobile phone no longer and takes the call just as STEVE rejoins the group. LENA suggests they all turn off their phones. STEVE explains that the builders hit something in the ground that could interfere with the pond they are building. The others want to press on with the documents as it is now 3.30pm but TOM is still on the phone. LINDSEY apologises to KEVIN & LENA and they make more small talk about LINDSEY'S baby and Kyle Hendrickson their friend in common. LINDSEY asks who they are talking about and she only remembers when STEVE reminds her of a joke that Kyle told him. The joke is racist and LINDSEY asks him not to tell it.

LENA attempts to explain that some of their concerns about the plans for the new house are related to their personal connection to the neighbourhood, She is worried that the black community who have been living there and remained there in the past fifty years are in danger of becoming priced out now that more middle class people are wanting to live in it again. LENA recalls that this is part of her own family history. She does not want to see big unaffordable homes replacing the ones like she grew up in. She wants that era in history to be valued by preserving the architectural heritage of the neighbourhood as expressed in the petition which has prompted this meeting. LENA's great aunt was one of the first black families to move to the area.

STEVE counters with a query that the values of the properties have gone up since the middle-classes starting wanting to live in them again. TOM says they'd all like it to stay that way. LINDSEY says that she and STEVE get defensive because they also love the neighbourhood but they see its potential and not how it used to be. LENA is offended. In an attempt to steer away from race, STEVE starts talking about the area's German origins which KATHY endorses. She is the daughter of KARL and BETSY LINDNER who later moved out to Rosemont. Steve quotes an article about how the demographic changed and in the 70s- 80s the area declined. He tries to avoid derogatory terms but LENA is offended and asks them what they mean. KEVIN says that they were all drug addicts when they were kids. The others are not sure whether he is joking or not. The discussion turns to the nature of trapping people

in poor communities and STEVE starts to explain the Prague Ghetto. LENA explains that they have visited Prague. They make small talk about visits to Europe and skiing.

LENA explains that she is not trying to romanticise her childhood. Her objections are not just about her personal connection to the house but to the principle. She explains that her great aunt bought the house and she used to play in the back yard on the crepe myrtle tree. LENA says she can't remember seeing a single white face in the area apart from Mr Wheeler who had Down's Syndrome. LENA's great aunt was a domestic worker and she knows that the history of the house was a factor in their being able to afford it.

LINDSEY and STEVE don't know the history of the house and Kenneth's story is told to them. LINDSEY is outraged. She thinks it should be the law that such stories should be made clear in a house sale. She gets very upset at the idea of bringing up children in a house where there has been a suicide. The atmosphere is broken by DAN who turns up with the trunk from 50 years before very battered and dirty. DAN jokes about it containing buried treasure. Suddenly he senses the tension in the room.

TOM returns to the group and LINDSEY apologises saying she is under a lot of stress as the demolition was due to start on Monday (today is Saturday) and the petition has put all their plans into question. TOM starts to enumerate the options but KATHY objects saying he can't require an architect to change the plans at the 11th hour given that there is no legal obligation on them to do it. TOM quotes the wording from the City Council saying that the area is being considered for a conservation area and would then be designated for single-family dwellings. LINDSEY points out that communities change and LENA asks them to consider the longer term impact and the political motivation of allowing such a community to change. STEVE asks her to be frank and talk about what she really means – race. LENA asks if she has been called a racist. LINDSEY is appalled by STEVE.

LINDSEY distances herself from STEVE and claims that half her friends are black. TOM attempts to pull them back to the matter in hand. Suddenly all the language appears to be laced with racist subtext. LENA provokes STEVE into telling the racist joke which LINDSEY had earlier forbidden him to tell. She retaliates with a joke about white women. STEVE refuses to see why the jokes are offensive and states that if anyone is in danger of being marginalised it's the white middle-class male because there is now a black man in the Oval Office. He says he is offended by SUV drivers with yellow ribbons on their car supporting the War. Kevin says he has three on his car, one for each member of his family serving overseas. The church clock chimes 4pm. TOM asks for final thoughts, LINDSEY says she feels angry that

because she want to move into the neighbourhood she is being made to feel like her ethics are being called into question. LENA says they are not questioning her ethics; they are questioning her taste. LINDSEY now feels properly insulted and cannot let it go. KATHY and TOM both do their best to smooth over this moment by offering to call later. KEVIN wishes LINDSEY and STEVE a pleasant evening and ushers LENA out but not before he hears STEVE use offensive language about LENA. He returns and threatens STEVE.

DAN enters with the trunk he has opened oblivious to the fight. LINDSEY attacks STEVE for insulting LENA, LENA attacks KEVIN for waiting all this time before backing her up, STEVE tells LINDSEY he agrees with LENA that the house is too big, and KEVIN is angry with LENA for wanting to have a fight with him. LENA and KEVIN leave arguing whilst STEVE and LINDSEY continue their argument.

Unseen, a young man dressed in 1950s clothes descends the staircase. He carries a pad and a radio. He sits by the window and writes on the yellow pad as Dan removes a note on yellow paper from the box. STEVE and LINDSEY leave still arguing. They slam the door. DAN reads aloud. BEV appears from Act One and speaks to KENNETH. It is very early morning. RUSS has gone to work. KENNETH is dressed smartly apparently for a job interview. FRANCINE arrives ready for work. BEV goes back upstairs to bed. KENNETH turns up the radio and continues writing.

LENA

(following KEVIN) Just leave it a-lone. Let 'em be. I don't care wha kinda bullshit they think, all I want to do is go home and now and take the longest shower of my life.

Act Two

KEVIN

Whattya think I'm deaf or something? Standing right Standing right there on your your front doorstep- Oh no, I heard you loud and clear. I'm just giving you the opportunity to repeat it to my face

STEVE

(innocently) What? What? What? I didn't... Hey, hey, hey, whoa. Back off, man. What is your fucking problem, dude? I didn't do anything to you or to her so why can't you chill?

LINDSEY

(to KEVIN) No no no no - I told you. It's the pressure. It's the pressure. we're both under a huge amount of pressure and yes he acted like an idiot but could we all just maybe step off, please?



Who's Who - Onstage

Russ Stoller - white late 40s

A Rotarian, works as a professional about to move house and start a new job. Mourning Kenneth his son. Married to Bev. Due to move to Glen Meadow.

Stuart McQuarrie



Dan - white late 40s

A Builder.

Bev Stoller- white 40s

A Housewife, her life revolves around family and community. She has one servant Francine. She busies herself with projects. Mourning her son Kenneth. Due to move to Glen Meadow.

Sophie Thompson



Kathy Lindner - white 40/50s

A lawyer working for Steve and Lindsey. Daughter of Betsy and Karl Lindner. Born in Clybourne Park but grew up in Rosemont, an outer suburb.

Francine - black late 20s

A domestic worker in the house of BEV and RUSS. She is married to ALBERT. She discovered Kenneth's body after his suicide. She appears pleased to be leaving their employ when they move.

Lorna Brown



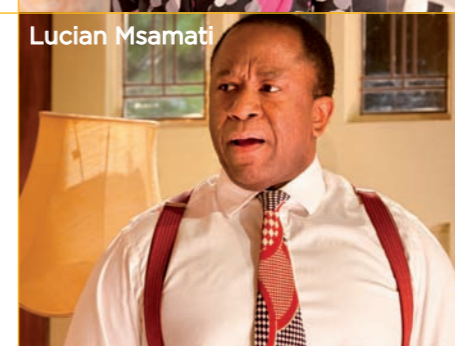
Lena - black late 20s

Working mother of three, has lived her whole life in Clybourne Park. Her great aunt bought Bev's and Russ's house. Used to play on the Crepe Myrtle tree. Well travelled, Member of the Owners' Association opposed to demolition of the house. Married to Kevin.

Albert - black 30s

Francine's husband. Father of three. Lives outside Clybourne Park. Has just bought a Pontiac car.

Lucian Msamati



Kevin - black 30s

Professional working in the centre of Chicago in the building opposite Steve. Father of three. Well-travelled, a skier. Member of the Owners' Association in Clybourne Park.



Jim – white late 20s

A minister. He has a bad back. Did not fight in the Korean War, had a desk-based job. Serves as an informal “community therapist” to his parish.

Sam Spruell



Tom Driscoll – white late 20s

Estate Agent. Grandson of Ted Driscoll who sold the house for Bev and Russ to Lena’s Great Aunt. He is gay. Has called the meeting.

Karl Lindner – white 30s

A Rotarian and chair of the Community Association. Married to Betsy. They are expecting their first child after the loss of a baby during childbirth. Uses American Sign Language with his wife.

Stephen Campbell-Moore



Steve – white 30s

Professional working in the centre of Chicago wanting to move in from Glen Meadow, has bought the house 406 Clybourne St. Plans to knock it down and rebuild. About to become a father for the first time. Well-travelled, not much of a sportsman.

Betsy Lindner – white late 20s

Married to Karl. She is deaf and communicates by lip reading, some speech, sign and notes. She is pregnant for the second time. The first baby died in childbirth 2 years previously.

Sarah Goldberg



Lindsey – white 20s/30s

High earning professional woman expecting her first baby wanting to move in from Glen Meadow, has bought the house 406 Clybourne St. Intent on creating the perfect new home. Well-travelled, thinks she has cosmopolitan outlook.

Michael Goldsmith



Kenneth – white 20s

Russ and Bev’s only son. Fought in the Korean War and took part in war atrocities. Could not get work in the local community. Committed suicide in 1957 in the house.

Who’s Who – Offstage

There are several characters mentioned who do not appear in the play. Each is mentioned to reveal something more about the context of the community, their attitudes or back story of the action we see on stage:

“The Wheeler Boy” known as “Mr Wheeler” in Act Two.

The Wheeler Boy has Down’s Syndrome. He is mentioned because he works in the local store, due to an act of generosity made by Mr Gelman its owner.

Well, you go right ahead and you tell those folks whatever you want, Karl. And while you’re at it why don’t you tell ‘em about everything the community did for my son. I mean Jesus Christ, Murray Gelman even goes and hires a goddamn retarded kid, but my boy? Sorry. – RUSS

Barbara Buckley, Don Lassiter, Tom Perricone, Ted Driscoll

The Rotary Set and the Clybourne Park Neighbourhood

Members of the white middle-class community of Clybourne Park Rotary Set of which Russ has been a member but which he has not been attending for over a year. Ted Driscoll is the Estate Agent engaged to sell 406 Clybourne Park. Don and Tom are also members of the Steering Committee of the Community Association, which Karl leads, who oppose the sale of 406 to a black family from Hamilton Park.

And Barbara said does Russ not go to Rotary anymore? Apparently they all keep saying where’s Russ? BEV

Murray Gelman

Jewish owner of a Grocery Store formerly owned by a family called Kopeckne. An indication of how some intercommunity tolerance has been achieved amongst

different white and religious communities. For Karl integration and assimilation are all important, something which he does not believe is possible between black communities and white communities.

In the end Murray Gelman found a way to fit in – KARL

The Olsen family

The Stoller’s immediate neighbours who Karl thinks will suffer by having black neighbours

Go next door. Talk to the Olsens. Talk to those who stand to lose – KARL

Kenneth Stoller (seen in Act Two only)

Russ and Bev’s son who committed suicide two years before the play starts. Bev tries to protect his reputation.

What do you think happens in a goddamn war? They told him to secure the territory, not go knocking on doors asking permission. And if he was man enough to admit what he did, maybe you oughta have the decency to do the same damn thing. – RUSS

Hector

The architect who has designed the new house. Considered to be temperamental, attributed to his Spanish heritage

KEVIN Spanish.
STEVE Temperamental.
KEVIN Toro toro.

Kyle Hendrickson

A black man in his 30s who works with Kevin and was at school with Steve.

Like the one solitary black dude in my entire high school. – STEVE

Lena’s Great Aunt, Lena Younger, and her family

The Unnamed Buyers in Act One who are the antecedents of Lena in Act Two – THE YOUNGER FAMILY
A black family living in Hamilton Park, a more down-at-heel neighbourhood in another part of the city. The onstage characters in Act One don’t feel it necessary to individualise them by giving them a name. In Act Two we find out a bit more:

“My great aunt ... was one of the first people of color to – in a sense, she was a pioneer...” LENA Act Two.

“Any rate, her great aunt – and she had to save a long time to be able to afford a house like this.” Kevin



Design

THE SETTING - 406 CLYBOURNE ST

Designer Robert Innes-Hopkins has the challenge of providing the audience with their first sense of the world of the play. For the transformation to Act Two he also has to indicate some of the history of the house in the 50 years which separate the two acts.



A picture of the model box for Act One, photo: Matt Drury, Design: Robert Innes-Hopkins

Bruce Norris gives specific clues in his stage directions at the top of each Act:

ACT ONE

The set is the interior of a modest three-bedroom bungalow, 406 Clybourne Street, in the near northwest of central Chicago. There is a sitting room with front door access, a fireplace with an oak mantelpiece, and a separate dining area with built-in cupboards. At the rear of the dining area a swinging door leads to a kitchen. A staircase leads up to a second floor, and beneath

it, another door leads down to a basement. There is a hallway and a bathroom door as well.

The house is in disarray. Cardboard boxes are stacked in corners. Some furniture has been removed, shelves emptied. Pictures have been removed from the walls and carpets have been rolled and stood on end.

ACT TWO

There is an overall shabbiness to the place that was not the case fifty years earlier. The wooden staircase railing has been replaced with a cheaper metal one. The oak mantelpiece and most of the woodwork have been painted over several times. The fireplace opening is bricked in, linoleum covers the large areas of the wooden floor and plaster has crumbled from the lath in places. The kitchen door is missing, and we can see through to an exterior door.



A Picture Of The Model Box For Act Two, Photo: Matt Drury, Design: Robert Innes-Hopkins

One way of approaching set design is to regard the setting of the play as a character. In the same way as an actor researches their character, the designer finds out as much as possible about the location and selects the details which can be used to enhance the audience's understanding of the story. In many contemporary plays, there is a single set. Part of the challenge is not to make the set obtrusive so as to distract the audience from the action but also not for it to be monotonous. Working with the lighting designer in particular, the designer will find ways of subtly transforming the set, maybe using a window as a light source to create shadow and suggest the passing of time or change of weather, or other non-realistic means to reflect the change of tension in the scene.

Using the pictures here, the stage directions from Bruce Norris and your own memories of the set and the production, discuss the decisions the designer and the

director arrived at to create a Clybourne Park for the London production.

What differences are there between Bruce's original notes and the model? Are there differences between the model and the final design? What elements were absolutely necessary, what elements have been dispensed with and how has the designer managed to incorporate light?

Notice how differently the playing space is laid out for the actors and what freedoms and constrictions it implies.

Clybourne Park is a fictional area of Chicago but it is inspired by real locations in that city. What tasks could you set yourself as the designer to research the design further?

Costume: dressing a character

Using the information on the characters and the other information in the pack, choose a character and imagine them on a shopping trip. What kind of clothes shopping would they do? Who do they go with and what do they buy? How much money do they have to spend? What will they be wearing on the hot Saturday afternoon when we meet them in Clybourne Park?



Context

INSPIRATIONS

KARL Act One

One of Bruce Norris's previous plays also produced by the Royal Court and directed by Dominic Cooke – *The Pain and the Itch* – also explored the double-standards behind liberal American middle-class attitudes during the presidency of George W. Bush. In *Clybourne Park*, Bruce Norris again writes about a phenomenon which is surrounding him in his everyday life: where and how are we to live?

(with a chuckle) Bev, I'm not here to solve society's problems. I'm simply telling you what will happen, and it will happen as follows: First one family will leave, then another, and another, and each time they do, the values of these properties will decline, and once that process begins, once you break that egg, Bev, all the kings horses, etcetera –

JIM Act One

Clybourne Park is set in a fictional area of Chicago, based on what was in the 1950s a comfortable, originally German-settled white middle-class neighbourhood. In the so-called black belt of Chicago on the South Side, black families are living in severe over-crowding, paying over-inflated rents and suffering from closed shops which prevent them from gaining access to better paid jobs. Act One takes place at a time when the black population of Chicago has grown from just over 200,000 to 800,000 as black families move north to Chicago away from the rural south where mechanisation has reduced job opportunities. Segregation is still part of everyday life: black and white communities live, learn, worship and play apart.

You do find differences in modes of worship. If you take First Presbyterian. Now, that's a church down in Hamilton Park and I've taken fellowship there and I can tell you, the differences are notable. Not a value judgment. Apples and oranges. Just as how we have our organ here at Saint Thomas, for accompaniment, whereas at First Presbyterian, they prefer a piano and, occasionally... (chuckles)... well, tambourines.

LENA Act Two

From the 1960s, we are to imagine that the area gradually became a predominantly black neighbourhood as white families moved out to the leafier suburbs on the edge of the city, where many of the city's firms had built their new headquarters. The rents/property prices in the central neighbourhoods become cheaper, offering the opportunity to working class families to live close to the city centre in less crowded conditions. In addition, Major Daley's high rise projects provide low-grade housing. Black women like Lena Younger and her great niece are increasingly heads of households in these high-rise projects. They build a grassroots movement which results in greater tenant involvement in the governance of the city's public housing from the late 1960s. During the 80s and 90s, a period of world recession which affects the working class of America and opens up a wide gap between those who are financially secure and people who are not, the *Clybourne Park* area becomes known for unemployment and the drug culture takes root. The area becomes more and more dilapidated but a sense of community remains.

And some change is inevitable, and we all support that, but it might be worth asking yourself who exactly is responsible for that change?...

I'm asking you to think about the motivation behind the long-range political initiative to change the face of this neighborhood... I mean that this is a highly desirable area... And now the area is changing...

And I'm saying that there are certain economic interests that are being served by those changes and others that are not. That's all.

STEVE Act Two

In the ten years before Act Two, the early part of the 21st century, economic regrowth, regeneration of inner city areas and the return of big business to the city centre has attracted the (predominantly white) middle classes back into previously avoided areas such as the fictional *Clybourne Park*. Property prices have risen and whilst many people regard this as a positive indicator of the health of a community, in Chicago a number

of community organisations and activists have raised concerns about poorer communities – white and black – being forced out of the city and into the dormitory suburbs on the edge of the city with all the attached problems this brings: poor transport communications, long commutes to work, reduced access to education, arts, cultural and sporting facilities and not least the fragmentation of long-standing, family, community and religious support networks.

This is why we have wars. One group, one tribe, tries to usurp some territory – and now you guys have this territory, right? And you don't like having it stolen away from you, the way white people stole everything else from black America. We get it, okay? And we apologize. But what good does it do, if we perpetually fall into the same, predictable little euphemistic tap dance around the topic?

A RAISIN IN THE SUN by Lorraine Hansberry

The original inspiration for *Clybourne Park* is the ground-breaking play by Lorraine Hansberry, *A Raisin in the Sun* originally produced in 1959 on Broadway and in London. The play was ground-breaking in terms of content showing the inner life of a black family, because it was a commercial success, and because its writer was the first black female playwright to be performed on Broadway and only the fifth woman to win the New York Critics Circle Award.

In her play, Hansberry depicts the Younger Family's struggle to do better for themselves in Chicago. Following the death of her husband, Lena Younger is beset by the conflicting needs of her family to realise their dreams: her son to start a business and her daughter to qualify as a doctor. At the risk of crushing them both she spends the insurance money from her husband's death on a house for her family – a house in a white neighbourhood, a neighbourhood called *Clybourne Park*.

"A Raisin in the Sun, importantly, contains only one white character, and he is called Karl Lindner. Arriving in the second of the play's three acts, Karl makes intermittent appearances thereafter to talk down to the Younger family, whom he refers to patronisingly throughout as 'you people', and to use whatever method is deemed best to keep this black family from encroaching upon his turf – that's to say, the (fictionally named) Chicago environ of *Clybourne Park*. Remarking that 'people want to live among their own kind', Karl acts as an emissary from that sector of America that Hansberry otherwise leaves out of her nearly three-hour play. Offering to pay the Youngers not to move into a white area, Karl eventually backs down, but not before offering a parting shot made less by way of threat than admonition: 'I sure hope you people know what you're doing,' he says within minutes of the end of a play whose closing image suggests the very endurance and resilience on the part of the Youngers that Hansberry's own text has shown over time, the Lindners of the world be damned."

*An extract from a longer essay by Matt Wolf available in the production programme of *Clybourne Park**



World Events		ACT ONE - TIMELINE
1950		1900s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Modern Credit Card Introduced • First Organ Transplant • First "Peanuts" Cartoon Strip • Senator Joseph McCarthy Begins Communist Witch Hunt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labour wins election UK • Korean War Begins (UK sends troops to support) • The Rotary Club is founded • CHICAGO - CHESS records founded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russ Stoller born
1951		1910s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of Hydrogen Bomb • South Africans Forced to Carry ID Cards Identifying Race • Color TV Introduced US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winston Churchill with the Conservatives leads UK • Truman Signs Peace Treaty With Japan, Officially Ending WWII • Festival of Britain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bev, Karl Lindner, Albert born
1952		1920s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car Seat Belts Introduced • King George VI dies • Cousteau Discovers Ancient Greek Ship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Great Smog of 1952 (US) • Polio Vaccine Created • CHICAGO is US' second largest city 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Betsy, Francine born
1953		1930s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joseph Stalin Dies - Soviet Union • DNA Discovered - UK • Hillary and Norgay Climb Mt. Everest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Julius and Ethel Rosenberg Executed for Espionage - US • QUEEN ELIZABETH II coronation UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russ and Bev Stoller marry - Kenneth born • Jim born
1954		1940s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report Says Cigarettes Cause Cancer • First Atomic Submarine Launched • Racial Segregation Ruled Illegal in U.S. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roger Bannister Four-Minute Mile - UK • CHICAGO Lyric Theatre Founded 	
1955		1950-5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emmett Till Murdered - the trial is one spark of Civil Rights Movement • Disneyland Opens • James Dean Dies in Car Accident • McDonald's Founded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rosa Parks Refuses to Give Up Her Seat • Warsaw Pact Signed • CHICAGO - Mayor Richard J. Daley Elected • CHICAGO Expressway Opened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenneth serves in Korean War • Jim has desk job in the Army • Karl and Russ are among the founder members of the Rotarians

1956		1955-7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look Back In Anger produced at the Royal Court • Grace Kelly Marries Prince Rainier III of Monaco • Hungarian Revolution • Khrushchev Denounces Stalin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suez Crisis • Velcro Introduced • Clean Air Act introduced in London • Cambridge Spies scandal UK • T.V. Remote Control Invented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kenneth's war crimes are revealed • Kenneth attempts to get work after leaving the army • Chicago experiences some of its hottest summers on record • Kenneth commits suicide. Russ starts to drop out of social groups in Clybourne Park • Betsy and Karl Lindner's first baby dies in childbirth
1957		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Seuss Publishes The Cat in the Hat • European Economic Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soviet Satellite Sputnik 	
1958		1959
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boris Pasternak Refuses Nobel Prize • Chinese Leader Mao Zedong Launches the "Great Leap Forward" • Hope Diamond is Donated to the Smithsonian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NASA Founded • Peace Symbol Created • Motorway system opened in UK • CHICAGO Our Lady of the Angels School Fire Hula Hoops Become Popular • LEGO Toy Bricks First Introduced 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bev and Russ Stoller decide to put their house on the market and move to Glen Meadow on the edge of the city • Ted Driscoll sells the house to Lena Younger from Hamilton Park • Karl Lindner, Rotarian and member of the Community Association attempts to block the sale • Bev and Russ move to Glen Meadow • Betsy and Karl have a daughter Kathy • The Youngers become the first black family to move into Clybourne Park
1959		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Castro Becomes Dictator of Cuba • International Treaty Makes Antarctica Scientific Preserve • Kitchen Debate Nixon and Khrushchev • THE SOUND OF MUSIC Broadway • Barbie Doll invented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • U.S. Quiz Shows Found to be Fixed • CHICAGO International Trade Fair Celebrates Opening of St. Lawrence Seaway—Queen Elizabeth's Visit • A RAISIN IN THE SUN opens in Broadway and London 	



WORLD EVENTS 21ST CENTURY		ACT TWO - TIMELINE
2000		1960s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global stock market crash due to dot.com bubble Millennium bug proves a myth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chicago Fire Wins U.S. Open Cup Field Museum Unveils "Sue", the Tyrannosaurus rex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Lindners move to Rosemount. Kathy grows up here
2001		1970s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Islamic terrorists crash planes into World Trade Center and Pentagon President Bush Announces War on Terror - UK gives support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour government 2nd term in UK Enron scandal breaks A RAISIN IN THE SUN revived at the Young Vic - UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steve born - goes to school with Kyle Hendrickson Kevin born Lena born, lives in Clybourne Park
2002		1980s
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tom born Lindsey born Clybourne Park becomes a predominantly black area Kathy qualifies as a lawyer
2003		1990s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US and UK forces lead forces in Afghanistan against the Taliban E2 Nightclub Fatalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHICAGO Fire Wins U.S. Open Cup CHICAGO Meigs Field Closes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clybourne Park acquires the reputation of being an undesirable neighbourhood in middle-class/white circles Lena's first child is born
2004		2000s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHICAGO - Millennium Park Opens - 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Raisin in the Sun revived on Broadway, with P Diddy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lena and Kevin have two more children
2005		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labour wins third term in UK Suicide bombers attack London Transport killing 52 Civil partnerships introduced in UK Kyoto protocol on climate change unsigned by US 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> White Sox Sweep World Series Hurricane Katrina Kwame Kwe Amah's Elmina's Kitchen is the first commercially produced play by British Black playwright in UK 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steve and Lindsey marry. They live in Glen Meadow Tom Driscoll joins family firm of estate agents Kevin's family members serve in Afghanistan and Iraq Kevin and Lena become members of the Owners' Association Property values in Clybourne Park and central Chicago climb as people wish to live closer to work

2006		2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHICAGO Fire Wins Open Cup CHICAGO CTA Pink Line Begins Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHICAGO Abakanowicz's Agora Dedicated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steve and Lindsey start a family. They buy a house in Clybourne Park from Tom Driscoll's Estate Agency
2007		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kathy is tasked with answering any objections to the development project
2008		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lena and Kevin represent the Owners' Association to try and limit the development of the new house on 406 Clybourne St
2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dan the builder finds and digs up Kenneth's foot locker under the dead myrtle tree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHICAGO Wins Right to Represent US in Bid for 2016 Olympics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Banking Crisis affect major banks and crisis in mortgage lending 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> President-elect Barack Obama gives acceptance speech in Chicago's Grant Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Earthquake in Haiti 4 billion people have a mobile phone Obama promises to close Guantanamo Al Capone's hideout sells for £2.6m 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change - speech is given by Barack Obama - the talks in Copenhagen end in disarray Barack Obama wins Nobel Peace Prize 		

Show Timeline: These are facts which are clear from the text without having to make artistic interpretations. Which other questions are not answered that the actors, directors and designers need to make in order to create the production? In this instance, they are fortunate, they can ask the writer who is very much alive. In other types of productions and where the writer is not available, other forms of research are needed.



THEMES – HOW PROGRESSIVE ARE WE?

Bruce Norris' overarching concern is to question the nature of liberalism in 21st century America. Along the way he also finds a number of other themes which express and expose the extent of our liberalism. Ask the students to discuss to what degree they think attitudes have changed between 1959 and 2009 in the UK and the US. What influences the degree of change? In Act One the characters are more offended by the use of swearing than by what we would call racist terminology or pejorative words and facial gestures about the man with Downs Syndrome. There is quite a lot of formality in dress and manners but blatant sexism towards Bev and Betsy. What other forms of double standard or changing standards did you notice between Act One and Act Two?

Property Values/Community Values

KARL (with a chuckle) Bev, I'm not here to solve society's problems. I'm simply telling you what will happen, and it will happen as follows: First one family will leave, then another, and another, and each time they do, the values of these properties will decline, and once that process begins, once you break that egg, Bev, all the kings horses, etcetera – (cont'd)

BETSY (overlapping) Kaahhh?

KARL (continuous) – and some of us, you see, those who don't have the opportunity to simply pick up and move at the drop of a hat, then those folks are left holding the bag, and it's a fairly worthless bag, at that point.

LENA And some of our concerns have to do with a particular period in history and the things that people experienced here in this community during that period – both good and bad, and on a personal level? I just have a lot of respect for the people who went through those experiences and still managed to carve out a life for themselves and create a community despite a whole lot of obstacles? Some of which still exist. That's just a part of my history and my parents' history – and honoring the connection to that history – and, no one, myself included, likes having to dictate what you can or can't do with your own home, but there's just a lot of pride, and a lot of memories in these houses, and for some of us, that connection still has value, if that makes any sense?

Political Correctness & Liberalism

KARL It's a colored family.
(Pause. JIM shakes his head.)

JIM (to KARL) Sorry, don't we say Negro, now?

KARL (irritated) I say Negro...

KEVIN How many white men does it take to change a light bulb?

TOM Okay, I'm about two minutes from leaving? So, heads up.

LINDSEY No. Can we please not? I'm asking you as a favor.

KATHY Aha. See? Shoe's on the other foot now.

STEVE Fine! Tell me the joke. I want to hear it. I do. (cont'd.)

STEVE (continuous) How many white men does it take to change a light bulb?

KEVIN All of 'em.

STEVE And why is that?

KEVIN One to hold the light bulb while the rest of 'em screw the entire world.

STEVE So?!! You think I'm "offended"? I can do this all day. What's long and hard on a black man?

LINDSEY How is this happening?!!

KEVIN I don't know, Steve. What is long and hard on a black man?

STEVE First grade. Are you "offended"?

KEVIN Nope.

STEVE Neither am I.

LINDSEY You can't be offended, you moron – (cont'd.)

STEVE (astonished laugh)... I can't?

LINDSEY (continuous) – because you've never been politically marginalized,

War & Patriotism

JIM I was in the service, too, you know.

RUSS (bitter laugh) Oh right. And tell me again. How many people did you kill?

BEV Oh, for god's sake, stop it!!

RUSS Sat behind a desk, didn'tcha?
Goddamn coward.

STEVE Bunch of white suburban assholes still driving around with the yellow ribbon magnets on their SUVs in support of some bullshit war. That's the kinda shit that offends me.

KEVIN Why does that make them assholes?

LINDSEY (to KEVIN) You have one on your car?

KEVIN I have three of 'em.

STEVE Three.

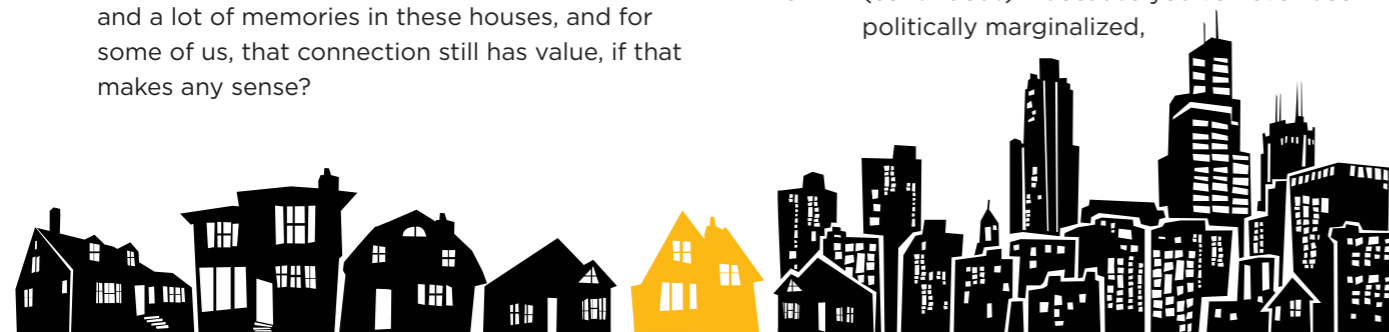
KEVIN Three.

LINDSEY Three?

LENA Three.

STEVE Three.

KEVIN One for each member of my family serving overseas.



Rehearsal Notes

STYLE OF THE PRODUCTION

In Clybourne Park, Bruce Norris sets a demanding challenge to the creative team and the cast. He has almost created two plays in one with very strong, if subtle, connections between the two halves.

The director, Dominic Cooke, wanted to be sure to differentiate the two acts by allowing each one to have a different character. Act One is set in 1950s Chicago and in the age of arrival of the TV sitcom. Dominic encouraged the actors to regard the characters in terms of their physicality as stock characters: the funny one, the depressed sardonic one, the preacher, the good housewife, the maid. He also made a decision to adopt a very much more presentational kind of performance so that there is a heightened theatricality to some of the moments. However, it is very important that the actors do not play for laughs and that the characters do not know that they are at times very funny, as funny as they are at other times deeply tragic.

In many senses the play is a comedy of manners, observing how people behave. Sophie Thompson, who plays Bev and Kathy, says in the podcast (see page 31) that the play is as much about what people don't say. In the 1950s, good manners dictate that people hold in their opinions, although in some areas they are more forthright than we could tolerate today. In Act One, Bev does her utmost to maintain the social niceties in the middle of physical and mental chaos.

Do you know I just got through saying how Russ and I never entertain and here it is a regular neighborhood social! – BEV

Act Two set in the post-Obama glow of 2009 is much closer to home. The characters could again be regarded as stock characters although we have had to redraw the lines of stereotype in the intervening years. The action is much more static and the importance of non-verbal communication is much more evident.

Common to both Acts is that, just as in life, there is never just one thing happening. The plot twists and

turns seemingly erratically through the course of a single hour. The actors need to be able to maintain the focus on whatever appears to be at the forefront of the action, moving the plot forward, as well as working as an ensemble to portray the life and relationships beyond what we are seeing onstage. They have the added challenge of portraying the events happening in real time.

Interview with Kate Hewitt – Assistant Director

Rebecca Manson Jones, a freelance director compiling these materials, made some notes direct from a visit to the rehearsals. In the Green Room she had a conversation with Kate Hewitt the Assistant Director who was taking a break from Understudy Rehearsals:

RMJ: I wonder how Dominic Cooke tackles working with the overlapping and simultaneous dialogues which are characteristic of Bruce's writing?

KH: It's actually very specific and broken down – it's very clear where the cross-overs should come. So it's important that the actors find the right connections so that when one voice is left hanging that's really clear. A good example of overlapping is when Jim comes over to "cure" Russ

RMJ: "to cure"

KH: That's our sort of short hand for his want, it's not as explicit as that, but it's clear in the text that although Russ has a lot of broken syntax, he is trying to hold it together. The name Kenneth is not mentioned. When Jim does say his name, Russ can't hold it in any longer.

RMJ: Dominic allows quite a lot of discussion in rehearsal?

KH: Yes particularly as we're working with two new cast members for the transfer into the West End. In some ways, working on the revival is a privileged second shot at some of the intricate revelations and allows us to uncover more.

The language really gives you the characters. For instance with the character of Steve, we've really noticed his fixation with being right. He is very specific and likes to cut through any rubbish

RMJ: What about the back stories to the characters? What decisions have been made about what jobs the characters do?

KH: Dominic leaves that largely up to the actors, in the sense that it is based on industries in Chicago and has to be a world where the relevant characters can come across each other. We're very sure that Lindsey in Act Two earns a lot. We know that Lena works too but it's the actor's decision what she thinks Lena does.

RMJ: The Royal Court is a writer's theatre. How much has Bruce been involved?

KH: In the original production he was here all the time and available for questions. For the revival he will be with us for the final week of rehearsals.

RMJ: Do you think the British audience enjoys laughing at the Americans? Is there a danger we don't see the implications for us?

Bruce questions how far our liberalism can extend. Are we prepared to do good and lose money? Everyone in the play thinks they are a progressive character. No-one thinks they are narrow-minded. When Lindsey blurts out that half her friends are black, she genuinely believes it and she can't hear how she sounds. – Kate Hewitt

KH: I think in Act One we enjoy laughing and being shocked by the attitudes from the past, especially the racism, and we are relieved that we don't think like that. In Act Two, it's a lot more challenging. But good comedy does hit a nerve and it does bring up discussions as drama does. Bruce questions how far our liberalism can extend. Are we prepared to do good and lose money? Everyone in the play thinks they are a progressive character. No-one thinks they are narrow-minded. When Lindsey blurts out that half her friends are black, she genuinely believes it and she can't hear how she sounds.

RMJ: What's the biggest shift for the actors from Act One to Act Two apart from costumes, set, style of language?

KH: One of the things that's really different is how the victim culture has seeped in to modern thinking. In Act Two all the characters are aware of "victimhood" and it can be used for status, a means to draw status. For example, the fact that Lena is connected to the Younger family who moved to Clybourne Park and who in the previous generation had been slaves in the southern states enables her to garner respect and provides her with a platform. In Act One, Albert barely gets to finish a sentence.

RMJ: This play can be described as a comedy of manners.

KH: Yes everyone is keeping up appearances. In Act One the characters reflect a culture where everyone is trained to perform in public and keep face. And everyone knows their place in the house. In Act Two the boundaries are blurred. Everyone is sitting in a circle. They interrupt, aren't sure of their position, on the surface it's all a lot more democratic.

And suddenly it's two o'clock and time to restart rehearsals.

SCENE STUDY – ACT ONE, PAGES 15–25

This scene study is based on observations direct from rehearsals. The questions are prompted by those asked by Dominic and the actors as they work on the scene themselves.

The rehearsal room is surprisingly small, squeezed into a small annexe next to the theatre. Its cosiness is emphasised by the fact that it is set up for Act One with a mountain of packing boxes and furniture set up on the playing area.

Dominic Cooke starts rehearsals promptly and picking up exactly where he has left off before lunch. After only two weeks in rehearsal, Stuart McQuarrie is almost sure of his lines and is working off book with Sam Spruell (who was in the original production) on a scene where Jim, the minister, calls round.

As they run the lines together, Dominic is very gently but firmly pulling them up if it isn't accurate. Once they have run the lines (just a short section), they go back and work the scene. Dominic asks Sam what Jim's want is. They agree on "to break him" ie: Jim wants to break down Russ's resistance, make him talk about Kenneth. Russ's want is "to repel him" to keep Jim off a private topic.

As they work through the scene, Dominic highlights how Russ seeks to avoid the topic of Kenneth. Jim mentions the son three times before Russ responds. They try a version where Stuart very clearly uses Russ's text to warn Jim away from raising the subject any more clearly.



Dominic draws the actors' attention to the break in eye contact after Bev's entrance. The characters attempt to regain the safety and comfort of social convention after Russ' break from polite speech.

JIM I just can't believe Kenneth would've wanted his own father to -

RUSS (maintaining calm) Yup. Yup. So, you can go fuck yourself okay?

(BEV enters with JIM's iced tea.)

BEV So wait. So if it's Napoli in Italian, then wouldn't adding an "E" before the "A" just seem superfluous? What's happening?

JIM Bev, I believe I will hit the road.

BEV What are you -? Russ?

RUSS Going upstairs.

BEV What happened?

JIM Not to worry.

BEV (to RUSS) What did you do?

JIM Another time.

BEV (to RUSS) Come back here.

JIM (overlapping, to BEV) No no. Russ made his feelings clear in...(cont'd.)

BEV (overlapping, quietly to RUSS) Why are you being like this?

JIM (continuous)....no uncertain terms.

RUSS (to BEV) Going up, now.

JIM Terms maybe more appropriate for the locker room than the -

BEV (to JIM) I told you so. I told you what it's like. And he uses these ugly words in other people's presence (to RUSS) and I'm not some kind of matron, but what in the world is wrong with civility?

What's at stake?

As you practise this scene, consider what's at stake here for the three characters (remember Bev has set this meeting up, is preparing iced-tea in the kitchen). Why has Bruce Norris chosen to show us this moment in their lives? Dominic asks the actors whether they think Bev might have cried in Jim's office about Russ' behaviour?

As a group work out what you think might have gone on? What could she gain or lose by opening up to Jim? Consider the factors, social, religious, their ages, that might influence Bev either way. How does it change their performance if she has or hasn't told Jim everything she is feeling? How would Russ feel about it if he thought she had?

Sophie Thompson's creation of Bev is very funny and it's easy to laugh at her but what's her real life tragedy? What's at stake for her if the man of the house can't function in her community? And apart from social concerns, what else might be driving her to "fix" Russ?

Difference in Status

Dominic focuses on Russ: born just after WWI he is a different generation from Jim, a much more private person. Explore by doing a version of the scene where at every piece of dialogue, Russ attempts to block Jim out. You can do this just with the text or physically as well, with the actor playing Jim attempting to invade Russ' personal space and get his attention. This is an exaggeration and should be followed up by a more naturalistic version. Try a version where Jim is very conscious of his status as the younger man. What might he do differently to try and get Russ to talk to him? What level of status does his being a minister give him?

SAVED BY THE BELL – comic interruption

In perfect comic timing, Albert's introduction to the play breaks a moment of great tension. What's achieved/changed dramatically by the door bell ringing when it does? Notice the stage direction "no-one moves". Why does no-one move? When the door is answered, why does Jim hesitate? What's Albert expecting when the door is opened?

What's Albert's action? Dominic suggests it is: "I placate you". Try different options. Look at the moment between Jim and Albert. Why is that social interaction so difficult? Why does Albert offer to wait outside? What is Francine's want when she re-enters?

Suddenly the stage gets very crowded. Having paid close attention to the accuracy of the text, the subtext and timing, the director's job is also to check the physical flow on stage. Remember this is a very crowded space, packed full of memories, anything could break. As you run the scene, remind the actors to be aware of this.

DIRECTING TIP!

Dominic has a wonderful way of giving notes introducing a new idea or identifying a problem by starting the sentence with - "One of the ways that will help". Try this out as you direct each other.

Exercises and Discussion

Moving Home

Moving house is often cited as the third most stressful thing after death and divorce. Bev, Russ, Steve and Lindsey manifest their stress in very different ways:

This exercise replicates something of what might be going on in Bev's head as she navigates her way through Act One.

It can be done as small groups, makes a great general warm up and will help the students understand how the chaos and conflicting demands of packing place stress on people. In a circle use the probably familiar exercise of gently throwing a juggling ball across the circle and establishing a rhythm. As the group gets more confident add in a second and a third ball.

Now, still in the circle, play a game called Always... Never.... Eg: Always hang your clothes up before you go to bed. Never leave them on the floor. Other good topics might include, Homework, shopping, going out, making toast.

The first person says the word "always" and each member of the group around the circle in turn adds a word to the sentence. When the sentence is complete, the group starts with a sentence beginning "never". You can offer themes to introduce the subject if that will help. When the group have got this second game sorted out, add the throwing and catching game back in so the group has to concentrate on maintaining both at once. The words go round the circle in series, the ball goes across at random.

An easier version of this is simply to ask the group to go round in rhythm repeating their own name but it's quite dull for sparky students and they should get the hang of "almost, never".

Physicality in Acts One and Two

In **Act One**, Bruce Norris has incorporated a lot of physical business into the opening pages to emphasise the sense of confusion and to highlight the different emotional states of the three characters.

Ask the group to work in threes. Based on the text from pages 3-4, ask them to set up three distinct rhythms reflecting their "Want" for the scene. Each character needs a distinct rhythm one each for BEV, RUSS and

FRANCINE. Once this is accomplished in their group of three they should attempt to cross the space with each of them sticking to their rhythm, trying to keep together and arrive at the same time. What do you discover?

In **Act Two**, there are lots of distractions which prevent the characters from pursuing the main task. In their podcast with Chris Campbell, the Literary manager of the Royal Court, the actors highlight that Act Two is a lot more static than Act One. Act Two requires the actors to use a lot more subtle non-verbal language to portray their thoughts and feelings.

This exercise was based on one developed by Max Stafford Clark when he was Artistic Director of the Royal Court Theatre and may be familiar to your students.

Set up an improvisation of about 5 or 6 students sitting in a circle. The situation is a public meeting about the proposed demolition of an old run down house in a close-knit community. The students should take a role based on the characters and decide on a scale of 1 to 10 how strongly they feel about the issue. 10 is to knock the house down and 1 is not to. Each character should also choose one of the traits below to inform their improvisation.

- Be Perfect purposeful, moral, high standards – is stressed by loss of control, low standards or illogicality
- Pleaser good interpersonal skills, law-abiding, likes to do the right thing – is stressed by being ignored or criticised or feeling to blame
- Hurry Up lively, adventurous, multi-tasker – is stressed by time to think, silence, having nothing to do
- Be Strong self-sufficient, helpful, reliable – is stressed by rejection, having to express feelings, exposing their weakness



- **Try Hard** intense, committed to righting wrongs, political – is stressed by being criticised for being irresponsible, for not caring or by other people's irresponsibility

Use these so-called “drivers” and the numbers 1-10 to inform the energy of the static scene. Ask the students to explore the dynamics of a seated scene and only allow them to break the convention at exceptional moments.

Which social contracts will inform the alliances/conflicts between the characters: marriage, partnership, class, race/ethnicity, religion, sexuality, profession, education, gender, age?

As an outside director add these prompts one by one to help individual students layer their character.

COMEDY OF MANNERS – Keeping up Appearances

In both Acts, it is important to most characters most of the time that they come across as good, happy and considerate people, welcoming to strangers and open to change. What happens however, when their own comfort is threatened?

“People don’t always say what they mean. But they always mean what they mean” – David Mamet

How open are the characters in Act Two about what they are feeling?

LENA (formally) Can I – ? I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to – but I was hoping I could say something to everyone, if you don’t mind?

(All pause for LENA.)

LENA As long as we’re stopped?

KATHY No. Do. By all means.

KEVIN Go ahead.

TOM Yeah yeah, please.

LENA All right, well... (clears her throat) Um, I just feel like it’s very important for me to express, before we start getting into the details-

STEVE Sorry, but – Maybe we should wait for Lindsey? Don’t you think? If it’s something important? Otherwise -

KEVIN (to LENA) Do you mind?

STEVE Wind up repeating yourself.

TOM (to LENA) That okay with you?

LENA It’s fine with me.

STEVE But, hold that thought.

LENA I will.

Explore the possibilities of what’s really behind the lines. What do Kathy, Kevin and Tom mean when they all speak at the same time? Does Lena mind waiting, why does Kevin stop her?

Observe amongst the group how easily we make eye contact with people we know well. What happens if the teacher/parent needs to discipline a student/child? How does it change? In rehearsals, Dominic is very aware of how the social conventions of 1959 and 2009 affect how comfortable the characters feel with each other and how they behave, especially the use of eye contact. In this moment, who is able to look each other in the eye and how?

The Polite Insult

An exercise suggested by Kate Hewitt, the Assistant Director, is to play with levels of civility. The characters in Act Two make a great effort to get on even though they are only gathered because there is a massive difference of opinion between them.

LENA I mean, I know I’m not the only person who takes the situation seriously and I don’t like having to be this way but I have been sitting here for the last fifteen minutes waiting for a turn to speak – (cont’d.) – and meanwhile it seems like nothing is even remotely getting accomplished

STEVE No. I’m sick of – No. Every single word we say is – is – is scrutinized for some kind of latent – Meanwhile you guys run around saying n-word this and n-word that and whatever. We all know why there’s a double standard but I can’t even so much as repeat a fucking joke that the one black guy I know told me -

Try saying these lines with different degrees of openness and closedness of stance, eye contact, smiling. Imagine different levels of stress on the characters when they say them and the impact it has on the person/people they are speaking to. What happens if you are sitting or standing? Find a polite thing to say in response, however challenging the delivery of the scripted line.

JIM Not sure there’s a polite way to ask that.

TWO CHARACTERS – ONE PLAY

The actors are required to create two different performances in the two Acts, though there are some thematic cross-over between the characters. Using the resources and your memory of the show, what echoes can you find between the characters one actor plays. How can the actors draw on the characters from Act One in Act Two?

The action takes place 50 years apart in 1959 in Act One and in 2009 in Act Two. Ask your students to brainstorm or research what they know or associate with 1950s America. Ask the students to think back over the last decade in American and world events. There are some hints on page 18 to prompt them. What are the most significant events which have taken place in the years running up to the events on stage? How might these influence the characters’ attitudes and behaviour on and off-stage?

WRITING AND PLAYING IN REAL TIME

The action takes place between 3pm-4pm in each act – the running time on stage is also roughly one hour. Consider the constraints upon the writer of writing a play which largely takes place in one room in real time. How is this different, for example, from writing for TV/ film or an episodic play such as Shakespeare or Brecht? What limitations does it place on the writer and what opportunities does it offer?

STRUCTURAL ECHOES

Can’t Live In A Principal – Karl/Steve

This line is said in both halves of the play. Clybourne Park is carefully constructed so that there are echoes resonating through the play not just thematically, but also harking back to the play which inspired it, A Raisin in the Sun, and structurally between Acts One and Two. The text contains a very few but significant stage directions:

- In both halves the church is heard chiming 4 o’clock. What significance does the striking of the church bell have between acts one and two – 50 years apart?
- In both acts it is an extremely hot day – this is a factually accurate detail. Both of these summers were amongst the hottest on record. How does the high temperature contribute to the atmosphere?

- How important is the fact that the action takes place on Saturday? How is the playwright using the passage of time and the continuity between the eras?
- We’ve picked out some of the parallels for you to look out for during the production and to remind you about afterwards. See if there are others your students can recall or find from rereading the text.

The action takes place in each act in the sitting room of 406 Clybourne St in each act:

Consider:

• The condition of the building in each act	• The state of the living room in each act
• Who are the owners of the house	• Who moves the trunk in both Acts? What is their occupation? Which actor plays them?
• Who reads the letter in each Act?	• What’s the big difference between the two Acts?

Invite your students to analyse the impact that these crossovers and variations have on our experience of the play and the questions it is raising.

STAGE TERRITORY

Not to usurp your authority, Russ. Your castle. You are the king. – KARL

This is an exercise which helps actors understand status and how to use the set to demonstrate it. ACT ONE is set in Russ and Bev’s home. Set up your space as if it is the space in Clybourne Park. In groups of up to eight ask the students to enter the space one by one and to inhabit the space according to a number you have given them secretly. Number 10 is the most at home, no 1 the least comfortable. Finish the improvisation and ask the group to line themselves up according to what they have observed about each other on stage. Now ask the spectators to see if they agree. If not ask them to rearrange the actors. Finally show the numbers. Repeat the exercise using the democratic circle of chairs in Act Two. The dynamics of this space are very different. What do the actors have to do differently to indicate status?

What factors influence how the character is feeling about inhabiting the space?

CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS

Changing Times/Changing Attitudes – Public & Private Opinions

Part of writing great drama and enabling actors to create a fully rounded character on stage is to be able to write and play against your own opinions, even if or especially if, you have strong opinions about a subject. Clybourne Park lives on in the memory because as well as hitting hard and being thought-provoking, it is a comedy and the audience sees itself reflected in the inconsistencies displayed by the characters on stage.

Sometimes discussing these viewpoints in the rehearsal or class room can be problematic. Actors have to trust each other and respect opinions. One way in a workshop or as a group discussion to explore the attitudes is to use the following exercise. Mark out a scale on the floor using sheets of A4 numbered 1 - 10. The students gather on one side of the line facing the leader. Firstly as themselves, the students are asked to rate certain things as important to them eg:

• Music	• Fashion
• HOME - Where they live	• The ethnicity of their friends
• Community	• Religion
• Money	• Feminism
• Commuting - travel to work or school	• Equal Rights
• Property Values	• The Environment

You may know of other themes which will fire up your students and have spotted others in the play. Feel free to ask the students to brainstorm this with you.

As you call out the theme eg MUSIC the students, without speaking to each other, go with their gut instinct and stand in a line by behind the number where 10 is high priority and 1 low. 5 is wishy washy and makes bad drama so ask them to avoid 5. It is important for the students to be able to think and not be judged or judge others. Often there will be one or two who are in a different place to the general herd and sometimes they want to justify it or laugh at it. It's a judgement call how much of this to encourage. Sometimes it's good to let the group contemplate, change their mind but too much chat or to indulge in herd mentality is not helpful.

The amplification stage of this is then to ask the students to adopt a character - by choice or by lottery, picking a name out of your pre-prepared hat and asking them to do the same exercise from the character's point of view. You can use the character breakdown to help remind the students of the likely opinions of their character. Ask the students to notice the differences and similarities between the physical bar charts they make now from the one they made as themselves.

Further Action

Research

- Clybourne Park **Archive-www.royalcourttheatre.com**. Click on What's On/ Previous Productions for podcasts, trailers, reviews and Bruce Norris's blog from the original 2010 production at the Royal Court.
- The Pain and the Itch Archive - **www.royalcourttheatre.com**. Click on What's On/Previous Productions 2007 for podcast and reviews of the Pain and the Itch.

Other Plays

- A RAISIN IN THE SUN by Lorraine Hansberry
- Play, film, essay
- THE PAIN AND THE ITCH by Bruce Norris
- Big White Fog - Theodore Ward
- English People Very Nice - Richard Bean

Other Companies working with Bruce Norris

- Steppenwolf - **www.steppenwolf.org**



CLYBOURNE PARK



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Clybourne Park Background Pack compiled and written by Rebecca Manson Jones, January 2011.

