Study Guide

MORNINGSIDE

a new play

by Topher Payne
# Table of Contents

Table of Contents  
Summary of Play  
2  
Cast List and Character Descriptions  
2-3  
Audience Etiquette  
4  
Production History  
5  
New Stage and the Development of *Morningside*  
6  
Mississippi Playwright’s Life Comes Full Circle by Sherry Lucas  
8  
An Interview with Topher Payne by Drew Stark  
11  
Information about Atlanta’s Morningside Neighborhood and Topher Payne  
15  
Description of Lewy Body Dementia (WebMD)  
16  
Scenic Design and Costume Photos  
19  
How to Write a Play and How to Write A Script: from Creative-Writing-Now.com  
20  
Articles for further discussion  
24  
Teacher Evaluation Form  
25  
Student Evaluation Form  
26

Please send your comments and enclosed evaluation forms to:  
New Stage Theatre Education Department  
1100 Carlisle Street  
Jackson, Mississippi 39202  
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Summary of Play

_Worst. Baby Shower. EVER._
By Topher Payne
Directed by Topher Payne
_New Southern Comedy_

Nine women with secrets. A case of champagne. One unforgettable baby shower. Mississippian Topher Payne’s new razor-sharp comedy introduces us to the idyllic neighborhood of Morningside in Atlanta, Georgia. Brought to our stage thanks to our Mississippi Plays Series readings, this hilarious spin on modern motherhood will have you laughing, crying, and glad you paid a visit to _Morningside_.
_Recommended for ages 16+

New Stage Theatre

**Back Row L to R:** Hope Prybylski, Bryn Striepe, Jo Ann Robinson, Ali Dinkins, Jessica Wilkinson. **Front Row L to R:** Carolyn Choe, Annie Cleveland, and Joy Brashears Amerson

**Cast List:**

Grace………………Ali Dinkins
Louise……………Jessica Wilkinson
Roxanne..........JoAnn Robinson
Mackenzie………Hope Prybylski
Clancy……………Bryn Striepe

Elinor………………Carolyn Choe
Felicia………………Joy Amerson
Devyn………………Annie Cleveland
Sophie………………Kerri Sanders
CAST OF CHARACTERS

GRACE BOUCHARD DRISCOLL (50s) – Our host. Upper-middle class, capable, articulate, and unflappable. Charming and funny. Except, her husband left her two days ago so all those traits are really being challenged right now. She reads a room remarkably well, excels at formulating a plan.

LOUISE BOUCHARD CARLISLE (50s) – Grace’s older sister, based in Dallas. Mother of boys. The only sister who didn’t pursue higher education. Bubbly but resolute. Consistently underestimated, but has the determination of a woman who maintains authority in a house full of men.


FELICIA TAGGART (50s) – Grace’s next-door neighbor. A Cruise Director type- happiest when she’s orchestrating everyone else’s activities. Married, two children. The head of every committee ever. Sells high-end real estate. The only black woman in the room.

DEVYN DRISCOLL (30s) – The guest of honor. Grace’s eldest daughter, the good one. Married, expecting her first child. A professional mediator, which makes arguing with her doubly infuriating. She’s done everything right, and in the proper order. Pragmatic to a fault. Smiles with her mouth but not always with her eyes.

CLANCY DRISCOLL (30s) – Devyn’s little sister. Could never compete with Devyn’s high achiever status, so she went in the opposite direction. A bartender in Charleston. An agent of chaos. Messy, funny, impetuous, a little too emotionally available.

DR. MACKENZIENOVAK (40s) – Devyn’s best friend, whom she’s known since childhood. A pediatrician, single, no children. Raised in a conservative household, and a surprising amount of that managed to stick. Good-humored and thoughtful. Generally chooses the path of least resistance.

SOPHIE NAVARRO (40s) – Like Devyn, a professional mediator. On her second marriage, no children. Missed the office shower, so Devyn invited her to this one. That may have been a mistake. A loquacious Baltimore native, suffers no fools. Finds Southern social niceties quietly infuriating, but she’s learned the behavior.

ELINOR HUGHES (30s-40s) – Devyn’s other coworker. Not really a friend. Married, mother of two. Overheard Sophie being invited to the shower and basically invited herself. She’s a good person. Sincerely. But she fails to comprehend social cues and has a tendency to overshares. Genuinely curious about others in the worst possible way.

THE SETTING

The Driscoll home in Atlanta’s Morningside neighborhood

Springtime. The present.
This performance of *Morningside* at New Stage Theatre may be some students’ first theatre experience. To best prepare your students for today’s performance, we ask that you review these guidelines for expected behavior of an audience as follows:

- Stay with your group at all times and pay attention to your teachers and chaperones.
- Listen to the New Stage staff member who will board your bus and escort your group to the lobby.
- Be sure to go to the bathroom before the performance begins. It is hard to leave without causing a disturbance to those around you once the performance starts.
- Make yourself comfortable while keeping movement to a minimum.
- Please do not stand up, walk around or put your feet on the seat in front of you.
- Absolutely no gum chewing, eating or drinking in the theatre.

**Noise**

Live theatre creates a unique and dynamic atmosphere between actors and audience members for sharing ideas and emotional expression. In the same way that actors can hear what is happening on-stage, but they can also hear disruptions in the audience as well. While actors appreciate laughter and applause at appropriate times, excessive noise and talking is not welcomed. Even whispering voices can be distracting to the actors and others in the audience.

- Do not talk during the performance.
- Cell phones are prohibited inside the theatre. Not only is the use of cell phones during a performance distracting for both the actors and fellow audience members, the cellular signal interferes with the use of our sound system. Upon entering the theatre, please remind students (and teachers) to turn off all electronic devices and store them during the performance. At the conclusion of the performance, we encourage you to like us on Facebook and other social media platforms.

**Applause**

Applause respectfully acknowledges the performers and shows appreciation or audience approval. Traditionally, applause comes before intermission and at the conclusion of a performance. Dimming the lights on the stage and bringing up the house lights generally signals these intervals. A curtain call, when the cast returns to the stage for a sequence of bows, usually follows every performance.

Enjoy the show!
PRODUCTION HISTORY

MORNINGSIDE was originally produced by Georgia Ensemble Theatre (Robert J. Farley, Artistic Director) in Roswell, Georgia, opening on October 26, 2017. It was directed by Shannon Eubanks; Assistant Director was Suehyla El-Attar; the set design was by Kat Conley; the costume design was by Emmie Tuttle; the sound design was by Kacie Willis; the lighting design was by Piper Kirchhofer; the properties were by Kate Bidwell LaFoy; Production manager was Kristen Hennessey; The stage manager was Julie Phillips.

The cast was as follows:

GRACE BOUCHARD DRISCOLL  Shelly McCook
LOUISE BOUCHARD CARLISLE  Ann Wilson
ROXANNE BOUCHARD  Ellen McQueen
FELICIA TAGGART  Keena Redding Hunt
DEVYN DRISCOLL  Gina Rickicki
CLANCY DRISCOLL  Kate Donadio
MACKENZIE NOVAK  Stacy Melich
SOPHIE NAVARRO  Kelly Criss
ELINOR HUGHES  Lala Cochran
New Stage and the Development of *Morningside*

*Morningside* was originally presented as a ten-minute play in Atlanta at MOJO Fest 2017 benefitting the Jo Howarth Noonan Foundation for the Performing Arts, an organization dedicated to the creation of new works for female actors over the age of 40. *Morningside* first appeared at New Stage as part of The Mississippi Play Series on May 13th, 2018. Development of the script has continued through this production’s rehearsal process and is now being presented for the first time as part of the Eudora Welty New Play Series.
New Stage Theatre cordially invites you to

The Worst Baby Shower Ever.

MORNINGSIDE

a new comedy

written and directed by Mississippi native

TOPHER PAYNE

SEPTEMBER 11-23, 2018

Starring

Alicia Dinkins

Molly Emerson

Kasi Sanders

Joelle Wilkinson

Audra Cleveland

Carolyn Choe

Julia Robinson

Haylie Striepe

Hope Prybylski

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or newstagetheatre.com

“Deft and bristling... Though the story starts off as a snarky romp in which characters toss off one-liners like candy wrappers, it’s no pacifier. Payne is a formidable combination of acid and honey.”

THE ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

“A vibrant chamber piece... grounded with moving revelations, trenchant self-discoveries, drunken miscommunications, and, above all, a veritable symphony of the sort of clever and lyrical dialogue at which Mr. Payne excels. Topher Payne has once again proven that he is a contemporary master of creating roles for women, especially roles for women ‘of an age’ usually ignored by Hollywood (and young playwrights).”

ATLANTA THEATRE BUZZ

“A new addition to all-female ensemble plays in the vein of The Women and Steel Magnolias. This is women behaving badly in the most delightful way, and they keep the laughs rolling from the first nervous breakdown to the last.”

ARTS ATL
Mississippi playwright’s life comes full circle – from running the lights to running the show – in ‘Morningside’

By Sherry Lucas  September 8, 2018

Topher Payne, sitting with cast member Jo Ann Robinson, brings his play “Morningside” to New Stage Theatre.

The comedy runs Sept. 11-23.

The Underwood typewriter inked on Topher Payne’s arm is a tribute to the first machine that committed his stories to paper. The original was his grandfather’s and “since I can’t find a ribbon for it …” he shrugs, laughs fondly and considers – for a moment – the writing path that winds from small-town Mississippi to Off-Broadway, the Hallmark Channel and beyond.

“This is the scrapbook I travel around the world with,” says Payne, launching into a tattoo tour of connections to his storytelling career. There’s the self-start button from that same typewriter. Blooms honor his beloved beagle, Daisy.

Kudzu wraps it all up. “It’s uniquely Southern, a little bit of a nuisance and completely indestructible,” he says of the vine. “And, I think that’s something worth aspiring to.”

With tendrils just as strong, Payne’s Mississippi roots have pulled him back to his home state with “Morningside,” a comedy opening New Stage Theatre’s 53rd season. Payne is in the director’s seat, too, for this one. Set in an upscale Atlanta neighborhood, “Morningside” digs into the worst baby shower ever for big laughs and big truths about family, society and the minefields in both. The show runs Sept. 11-23.

Payne, 38, is back at his first job site with this one. As a 17-year-old kid from Kosciusko, he landed at the door of New Stage Theatre, the sole professional theater in the state, bound and determined to forge a career in the arts. He’d gone to Idyllwild Arts Academy in southern California for two years as a teen.

“It was an extraordinary opportunity and I was a terrible student,” he says. “God bless John Maxwell,” who gave him a job as a scene shop intern for the 1997-98 season. The
following year, he toured with New Stage’s Arts-in-Education program as an actor and
started writing what became his first play, “Beached Whales.” Its first reading
happened in New Stage’s Hewes Room.

That was 20 years ago. Two weeks ago, Payne is back in the Hewes Room, watching
nine actresses bring his “Morningside” to funny, poignant life in rehearsal for the main
stage production.

Twenty years ago, he was running the lights. Now, he’s running the show.

**Storytelling seeds**

Cleve and Sheryl Payne, the playwright’s parents, met in Jackson and moved to his
Kosciusko hometown to start their family. Payne’s grandfather had worked at the post
office in Kosciusko, and his dad went on to do the same — roles that, in a town that size,
were known to all.

Payne’s first real exposure to the power of storytelling came in the First United
Methodist Church Kosciusko’s annual passion play, “His Last Days” — “an outdoor
pageant where Jesus ascends to heaven in a cherry-picker. I mean, this was high tech!”
he says, “and it was a profound experience for the audience.

“I learned from a very early age, both from my family and from my church, that if you
want to convey something that really is meaningful to you, then the best way to do it is
to tell a story. That’s how I learned my family history. That’s how I learned my spiritual
practices. And of course, being a native Mississippian means that you come from a long
line of storytellers that have literally changed the world.

“For me, the path just made sense. Frankly, I was amazed anybody does anything else.”

That love of storytelling plus ingrained values about the treatment of other people made
all the difference in his career trajectory, Payne says. “Mississippians at their best have
a way of being and a way of creating community that makes space for delightfully
unique individuals.

“There is a celebration of eccentricity in Mississippi that I find quite endearing.” That
appreciation isn’t always a common thing, he says. “As a result, I don’t write stories
with villains. I can’t. I have too much empathy for any character that I’m putting on a
stage or on a screen.” His characters can still do horrible things — to comedic or tragic
effect — “but there’s a core understanding and appreciation for and of their humanity.

“If there’s anything that I get right as a writer, it’s that.”

**Connection and influences**

“Morningside” is brought to New Stage thanks to the theater’s Eudora Welty New Play
Series. The legendary writer’s spirit weighs in, too.

Payne’s Mississippi writer influences? “Welty, Welty, Welty,” he says like a chant. He
served wine at a party at Welty’s house once, and still holds dear a photo of her with
New Stage founder Jane Reid-Petty, laughing about some private joke.
“All Mississippi communities are secret matriarchies,” he says, where strong women are the real decision-makers.

A baby shower’s women-centric setting proved irresistible. “Morningside” delves into some of the contemporary challenges women face, when tradition and social expectations clash with progress and personal desires. The new play has had just one previous production, and Payne relishes the chance to perfect the script. “I don’t think anybody gets it right on the first try. Certainly not me.”

New Stage’s support, a dramaturg’s services and, he says with an eye-twinkling tease, “a very profound and opinionated group of actresses around the table” will all help his homework on the play.

The ensemble cast includes, from Jackson and surrounding communities, Ali Dinkins, Jessica Wilkinson, Jo Ann Robinson, Joy Amerson, Annie Cleveland, Kerri Sanders and Hope Prybylski, and, from Atlanta – Bryn Striepe and Carolyn Choe.

A Southern voice

Payne moved from Jackson to Atlanta in 1999, finding a just-right spot big enough to pursue his career but not as huge as Los Angeles and New York, he says. “There is a decided Southern sensibility to my own approach to life and Atlanta complements that really well.”

The prolific writer has penned more than 20 plays, which have been produced around the world. Other works include “Swell Party,” “Perfect Arrangement” and “Tokens of Affection.” His TV movie writing credits include “A Gift to Remember,” “Broadcasting Christmas” and “My Summer Prince.”

He names as career highs those milestone moments where achievement and close ties come together. Opening night Off-Broadway of “Perfect Arrangement,” for instance, with 15 family members in attendance. The premiere of his first Hallmark movie. “I missed the L.A. premiere but the Bolton premiere was amazing! Those are the tremendous moments.” Awards have come his way, including the 2014 Osborn Award by the American Theatre Critics Association. But, celebrating success, surrounded by loved ones, is the real reward.

“My parents were given the blessing and the challenge of a kid who was going to follow a different path than they did. And they spent a lot of time and devoted a lot of heartache and resources to helping me find my way.” When something feels like the payoff of that investment, it’s special.

“Morningside” at New Stage Theatre is just such a moment. “I finally brought a show home.”

For show times and tickets to “Morningside,” visit newstagetheatre.com or the theater box office at 1100 Carlisle St. in Jackson, or call 601-948-3531.
DS: What first inspired you to become a playwright?

TP: I was raised in the Methodist church, so my understanding of the stories that define our morality, and how we relate to each other, was all taught to me through parable. So, from any age that I can remember, everything that I needed to know that was essential, about life, was told through parable. And within my family, because we are Mississippian, it was the same thing, our family history was told through story. So, that was just my understanding of the world. As I was growing up, I wrote my own stories, and then really found that it was how I sorted out the concept of another person’s perspective, was putting it on paper, to try to capture their voice. When I was starting out, that was me, acting around with my stuffed animals. And then, as time went on, it really became, sort of, training me for empathy. It was allowing me to consider another person’s perspective. And so, for as long as I was able to put pen on paper, that’s how I figured out the world. Around seventeen, eighteen, I started having the impulse, to take some of those questions that I had been putting on paper, some of those perspectives that I was tempting to make sense of, and bring them to an audience. So I did my first one-act play when I was seventeen in the Hewes Room.

DS: Are there certain playwrights that you admire?

TP: I came to other playwrights fairly late which I am now grateful for. That I didn’t have influences. I was an avid reader when I was a kid. And performer. But I probably did not read my first play that was not someway related to church until I was probably sixteen or seventeen years old. So I was writing plays long before I was reading them. When I finally did, it made me much better at my job than when I didn’t, or at least made me realize how bad I was. Beth Henley was the first playwright that I ever knew existed, because she is, Mississippi’s playwright of the late 20th century. It is Beth Henley, and Tennessee Williams before her. So I became enamored with Beth Henley, scraping around for any book of her I could get my hands on. Then, after that, I don’t have a specific playwright that I look at their body of work and say, “Yes. This is my playwright. That’s the career that I want.” Which was a big motivating force for me that I am cultivating a new audience.
DS: Who or what was your lifeline at that time in your life? Was it theatre? the work? mentors?

TP: Mentors came later. After I started at New Stage. In the early-going, I was blessed with parents who were utterly baffled by me. But fervently wanted to find a way for me to successfully navigate my way through the world. They had to come to a place of embracing and understanding, that in order to do that, they would have to step well outside the world as they had experienced it. The great blessing of my life was the fact that they were able to make that leap. Which must have been terrifying, you know? But because of that, I had moments like, just knocking on the door of New Stage Theatre as a seventeen year old and say, “I know this is what I’m supposed to be doing. What can I do?” The first job they gave me was in the scene shop. So, that’s what I did for a year. John Maxwell was the Artistic Director at the time, and became one of the key mentors in my life. They had no programming after the MainStage shows, but you could fit a couple of 4x8 platforms in the Hewes Room. I was writing plays and wanted the opportunity to present them to an audience. I had stories that I knew I wanted to build a community around. So we launched Late Night New Stage off of that. After the MainStage show, for free, you could come down to the Hewes Room at 10:30, and see a 20 minute play, written by one of the interns, starring all of the other interns.

DS: How do you feel that Morningside, or your return to New Stage, fits into our theme this season of The Power of Place?

TP: This was the first place that I found that looked at what I was attempting to do and said that they would help me find an audience. I was just saying to my cast today, if I thought my voice was the only one that was needed in my storytelling, I would write novels. Then, I would write something on a page, I would hand it to you, you would read it, and that would be the extent of the exchange. I do not do that. I am a playwright and a screenwriter. Everything I do is meant to be the first step in a very large process that involve the efforts of a whole lot of people. The resultant story is in no way defined exclusively by me, I just give a place from this to start. And the initial impulse is the very thing that, twenty years later, is still the fervent desire to build a community of people, on-stage and off.

DS: Why write a play of nine women? Each one of these female characters are so different from each other.

TP: I tried to embrace a variety of perspectives. Some of which I agree with, some of which I disagree with, but all of those I find worthy to be spoken allowed. I lay the foundation for them, to give them a voice. I’m just Step 1. I am, quite frankly, the least interesting step. Or, at least to me. So, Steel Magnolias is thirty years old. The Women is eighty years old. And there is so much to be said to the credit of those two shows, as fine examples of an all-female cast. But they do not speak to the particular sub-sets of challenges and circumstances women face now. And they are not about ideas. Twelve Angry Men is one of my favorite plays of all time. And Glengarry Glen Ross, I have a lot of deep admiration for; that’s just a solid play. I don’t see plays like that for women. A
very large group of women battling out ideas. Plays about men tend to be about thoughts, plays about women tend to be about feelings. And I think that is unfair for both. Because they are inextricably linked. Every thought is a feeling, every feeling is a thought. One inspires the other. And I wanted a very idea driven piece for a group of smart women. Who are playing smart women. I love how hyper articulate the women in \textit{Morningside} are. I love how unapologetic they are about the positions they hold. That does not mean they not open to change, but they will not apologize for the space that they currently occupy. I love that about these women.

\textbf{DS:} For the world premiere production of \textit{Morningside} in Atlanta, I noticed that all the production staff were women. If you could talk a bit about that experience and how it relates to your experience here, as playwright and director.

\textbf{TP:} It sets a wonderful precedent for the show that I would love to see continue. Twenty-three women were involved in that production. We gave jobs to twenty-three women. We gave resume credits to twenty-three women and allowed them to show what they were capable of doing. As for costume design, it is not uncommon to have a female costume designer, it is less common to see a female lighting designer, or a female sound designer being given professional opportunities. Or a female master carpenter, for that matter. To have those roles represented on our team of qualified women who showed what they are capable of got them more work. So I guess that is Step Two. Step One you build a community and Step Two is you make your community better.

\textbf{DS:} Conflict resolution seems to be a recurrent theme in your play. You also chose to make a character who is also suffering a physical decline.

\textbf{TP:} I was inspired so much by my aunt, Dr. Patricia Payne, who took me to my first play, who also bought me my first laptop computer. I don’t journal: I find it a little too navel-gaze-y for my taste, but I take notes. Which is effectively journaling, but darn it, I call it something else! So when I was going through the end of my first marriage, I took notes, and when we lost my Aunt Trish, I took notes. And knowing that there were discoveries I was making about my own life that I couldn’t sort out yet. But I wanted to remember the feeling that I was having at that time. And so much of the hope and optimism that informs a marriage and the disappointment and sense of failure that accompanies the end of a marriage, became grace. As someone who has decided not to include becoming a parent, at least certainly not in my immediate future, there are considerations that accompany that. There are sacrifices that you make for children, and it is important to acknowledge that there are sacrifices that you make by not having children. And Roxanne represents fears that I have in that arena who is also quite resolute in the decision she made. Now I’m in my mid-30’s, what will this decision look like when I’m sixty-five? So, this is informed by this incredible woman that I knew, informed by my own fear for the future, and the imagined circumstance that this woman Roxanne faces, which is very real to me now. You lump all those together and you get this complicated, conflicted character experiencing something profound.
DS: What do you foresee for your future or the future of Morningside’s?

TP: I hope that this is the beginning of a conversation between New Stage Theatre’s audiences and me. Take *Perfect Arrangement:* it had a few small regional productions and then we landed one that everyone paid attention to, and my life completely changed forever. I’ll play the long game with a show finding its audience. But particularly, I’m glad that this is the story we are bringing to New Stage because I love sharing this show with audiences that have loved plays like *Steel Magnolias* or other plays that I have significantly less respect for. Because I think they play for modest stakes and I have no time or patience for modest stakes. If you are going to gather a room full of people then it is your obligation to say something. And I don’t appreciate someone who wastes an audiences’ time. This show I think honors a tradition of southern comedies: those who appreciate Welty, those who appreciate Henley, those who appreciate Robert Harling can appreciate. But I like to believe the story is distinctive in its own right. And I know we are not playing on little stakes. And I think it has something to say. I do hope that it is. To have this delightful moment of finally telling all my cousins that they can see one of my plays at New Stage that I wrote, is awesome. Because they haven’t done that since Late Night New Stage. This is a significant moment in my life because of that. When I was seventeen years old, I was absolutely convinced this day would come. This is not beyond one of my wildest dreams. This was one of my dreams. To be able to come back and have access to this audience and tell a story. But I do hope that this is the beginning of a conversation and hope it is not the only story I get to tell to this audience. That’s the hope. That this is the beginning of a new chapter rather than the conclusion of something.
The title *Morningside* refers to an actual Atlanta neighborhood where Grace Driscoll and her daughters grew up. Below is some general information about that historic neighborhood. Although referred to contextually throughout the play, understanding general information about the setting of the play and its location informs the actors about their characters.

**Information on The Morningside/Lenox Park Neighborhood**

Morningside/Lenox Park is an in-town neighborhood in Atlanta, Georgia founded in 1923. It is located north of Virginia-Highland, east of Ansley Park and west of Druid Hills. Approximately 3,500 households comprise the neighborhood that includes the original subdivisions of Morningside, Lenox Park, University Park, Noble Park, Johnson Estates and Hylan Park. (Wikipedia)

Median list price of houses in the Morningside/Lenox Park area: $989,000

For a four-bedroom house, the average price is $1,115,000

Median income was $102,000 in 2016, nearly twice the average of $53,000 for Atlanta-at-large (city-data.com)

**Topher Payne, the Playwright**

Topher Payne is originally from Mississippi. In 2014, The American Theatre Critics Association awarded Topher Payne’s play Perfect Arrangement the M. Elizabeth Osborn Prize for Best Play by An Emerging Playwright. The play went on to be produced Off-Broadway in 2015 by Primary Stages and MARS Theatricals, and was a finalist for a 2017 Lambda Literary Award. His other works for the stage include Evelyn in Purgatory, Swell Party, and The Only Light in Reno. He has scripted three films for The Hallmark Channel: My Summer Prince, Broadcasting Christmas, and A Gift to Remember. Topher is a three-time winner of The Gene-Gabriel Moore Playwriting Award. He has been named Atlanta’s Best Local Playwright by readers of Creative Loafing seven times, and received the 2016 Suzi Bass Award for Outstanding World Premiere for the holiday comedy Let Nothing You Dismay.
We are surprised at the end of the play that the character Roxanne is suffering from Lewy Body Dementia. She conceals her medical diagnosis from her sisters by convincing them that she is drunk for the baby shower. The following is more information about the signs and symptoms of the disease.

**Lewy Body Dementia**

What Is Lewy Body Dementia?

Lewy bodies are clumps of protein that can form in the brain. When they build up, they can cause problems with the way your brain works, including your memory, movement, thinking skills, mood, and behavior. These problems can keep you from doing everyday tasks or taking care of yourself, a condition called dementia.

Lewy body dementia (LBD) is one of the most common types of dementia, after Alzheimer’s disease. It usually happens to people who are 50 or over. There are two types:

Dementia with Lewy bodies often starts when you have a hard time moving your body. Within a year, you start to have thinking and memory problems that are similar to Alzheimer’s disease, along with changes in behavior. Hallucinations may occur.

Parkinson’s disease dementia first causes movement problems. Trouble with memory happens much later in the disease.

Right now, there is no cure for Lewy body dementia. There are ways to ease symptoms, but scientists are also getting better at understanding the differences between LBD and other conditions.

How Is LBD Different From Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s?

These diseases are similar, but there are some key differences in the symptoms and when those symptoms happen who are diagnosed with LBD.
LBD may not cause short-term memory loss like Alzheimer’s. People with both conditions have trouble with thinking, alertness, and paying attention. But in LBD, those problems come and go. The disease can also cause hallucinations, often in the first few years someone has LBD. People with Alzheimer’s usually don’t have hallucinations until the later stages.

People with LBD also often act out their dreams and make violent movements while asleep, called REM sleep behavior disorder. Sometimes, it’s the first sign that someone has LBD.

LBD and Parkinson’s disease both cause movement problems, like stiff muscles and tremors. Most people with Parkinson’s don’t have problems with their thinking and memory (dementia) until the very later stages of their disease. Sometimes, they don’t have it at all. In the type of LBD known as Parkinson’s disease with dementia, these problems begin much sooner.

People with LBD also need different drugs for their condition than the ones that treat Parkinson’s or Alzheimer’s.

Causes

Lewy bodies, named after the scientist who discovered them, are made of a protein called alpha-synuclein. When they build up, they keep your brain from making the right amount of two important chemicals. One of them, called acetylcholine, affects your memory and learning. The other, called dopamine, affects how you move, your mood, and your sleep.

Scientists aren’t sure what makes Lewy bodies start to build up in the brain. They’re also not sure why some people get LBD and others don’t.

Some health conditions worsen your odds of getting the condition. People with Parkinson’s disease or REM sleep behavior disorder have a higher risk of LBD.

Symptoms

Not everyone will have the same warning signs. They often depend on the type of LBD you have. They might be mild or get worse at times.

Like other types of dementia, LBD causes changes in your thinking, mood, behavior, movement, and sleep.

Symptoms include:

Thinking Skills: Movement:

- Trouble making decisions, Shuffling or slow walk
- Judging distances, multitasking, Balance problems or falling a lot
- Planning, organizing, or remembering
- Losing concentration Stiff muscles
- Staring into space Tremors or shaking hands
- Hallucinations Stooped posture
Sleep:
- REM sleep behavior disorder (acting out dreams, including making violent movements during sleep or falling out of bed)
- Sleeping a lot during the daytime (as much as 2 hours every day)
- Trouble falling or staying asleep

The urge to move your legs when you’re at rest, called restless legs syndrome

Mood:
- Depression or lack of interest
- Anxiety
- Delusions, such as thinking a relative or friend is an imposter

Getting a Diagnosis
There is no one test that can diagnose LBD. Because it’s similar to other types of dementia, it’s hard for doctors to identify it, especially in the early stages. So they often try to rule out other health problems that might cause the same symptoms.

Treatment
Right now, there aren’t any drugs that can stop or reverse Lewy body dementia. But medications can help relieve your symptoms for a few months.

Besides medications, you can do other things to ease your LBD symptoms:
- Physical therapy can guide you through exercises that can improve your movements and balance.
- If you’re depressed, anxious, or have other mood problems, consider counseling or psychotherapy. They can help you find ways to handle your emotions. Support groups also are great ways to connect with others who live with LBD.
- Occupational therapy can help you learn easier ways to handle tasks that are hard to do with LBD.

Organizations like the Lewy Body Dementia Association or the Alzheimer’s Association can give you more information about dementia and direct you to resources in your area, too.

WebMD Medical Reference Reviewed by Neil Lava, MD on May 06, 2017

SOURCES:
- Lewy Body Dementia Association.
- National Institute on Aging.
- University of California, San Francisco: “Lewy Body Dementias.”
- Alzheimer’s Association.
Scenic Design

Costume Design

Doing the right thing
the wrong way
turns the right thing
into the wrong thing.
Jessica Whitman is
Louise
The Aunt Who Does Everything

You have no idea
how much work goes into
making everything
look effortless.
Annie Cleveland is
Devyn
The Mother-To-Be

Lives can fall apart.
Parties cannot.
All Dinkins is
Grace
The Hostess

They say
childbirth is beautiful.
I don’t know how
that rumor got started.
Carolyn Choe is
Elinor
The Uninvited Guest

Well, someone
has to set a bad example.
Brye Stilpke is
Clancy
The Little Sister
Topher Payne is a shining example of a hometown Mississippi artist who has achieved success through his storytelling. He refers to his creative process as a collaboration between the actor and the characters “talking” in his head. Below is a brief guide how to get your students started writing their own plays.

How to Write a Play and How to Write a Script

Suggestions from Creative-Writing-Now.com

How to write a play - So, you want to write plays?

Even if you don’t end up on Broadway, there are many other opportunities to experience the thrill of seeing your work produced on the stage, whether in community theaters, schools, or other amateur productions. And who knows where you’ll go from there?

How to write a play - Read and watch plays.

The first step in writing anything at all is to get to know the form. If you want to be a poet, you have to read poetry. If you want to write thrillers, you should read thrillers. If you want to write fortune cookie fortunes, go out for some Chinese dinners. In the case of playwriting, you should not only read plays, but also see them in performance. This is important in order to write plays that will work on the stage.

Brander Matthews in an article reprinted on www.theatredatabase.com recommends seeing the same play many times. The idea is that the first time, you will experience it as an audience member, getting caught up in the story. But after several repetitions, you can focus on it more objectively, noticing aspects of the playwright’s technique, as well as observing reactions of the audience.

The more you can learn about the way theater actually works, the better. If you write an eight-hour long play with seventeen set changes and live tigers on the stage, no one will come to your house and arrest you for breaking playwriting rules. On the other hand, there’s also a good chance that no one will produce your script.

If you're interested in writing plays, it's probably because you want them to be performed. In that case, you should be aware of practical aspects of the cost and ease of production. To understand these factors better, it's a good idea to volunteer at a local theater if you can or find some other way to get backstage and watch how things actually work. This is also a way to make interesting contacts in the local theater community who can give you feedback on your play and can eventually help you get it produced.

How to write a play - Come up with a main character

One way to get ideas for your play is to start with a character. Who is your play about? Your character might be based on a combination of real people you know. Another good strategy is people-watching. Invent lives for people you see in the
grocery store in the mall. What do you think their names might be? What kinds of homes and jobs do you imagine for them? What do you think is the most urgent problem that each person has to handle? Writing character profiles can help you imagine your characters more fully.

**How to write a play - Decide on a conflict**

Your play should have a conflict. Give your character a major problem that he or she has to solve immediately.

**Why? Why stir up trouble? why can't we leave your poor character in peace?**

If everything's perfect in your character's life, then nothing has to happen. Happiness is very nice to experience, but it's boring to watch. There's a reason why "Happily ever after" comes at the story's end. Cinderella and her Prince Charming wake up late, eat a nice breakfast, and take a little walk. Good for them. But no one would buy tickets to see the play.

It would be different if it were:

- "Happily ever after, except for one extramarital affair and its violent ending..."
- "Happily ever after until Cinderella discovered Prince Charming's secret dungeon..."

Think about the character you have invented. What's something this character desperately wants? What difficulties might get in the way? There's a conflict for you.

**How to write a play - Decide on a beginning point**

Let's say our play is about Prince Charming's extramarital affair. What's the best place to start it?

a. Prince Charming's birth
b. The first time Charming lays eyes on his future lover, a chambermaid named Petunia
c. Charming and Petunia's first kiss
d. When Cinderella walks in on Petunia and Charming in bed
e. When Cinderella stabs Charming and Petunia to death and throws their bodies into the moat

If we were writing a script for a movie instead of a play, we might choose the fifth option. The film opens with a crocodile peeling Charming's crown off his head, much as you might remove a scrap of foil wrapper from a bonbon, before taking a luscious bite. Then the movie flashes back to show a shocked audience the story of how Charming ended up in this state, Prince Charming's tragic transformation from eye candy to crocodile candy.
It's harder to flash back like that in a play. Movies and novels can jump around almost effortlessly in time and place, but such transitions become more complicated in the theater, where live actors are performing on a stage. Plays therefore often take on a shorter period of time. If we were writing a thousand-page novel with all the time in the world, we might begin with Charming's birth, his childhood, his first love, Mimi... But this is a play, not a novel, and we have a limited time to hold the audience’s attention.

What's the most exciting point in our story? Probably when Cinderella stabs Charming and Petunia to death. This is the story climax, the moment when the story's conflict reaches a peak. You can think of the climax as a decisive battle which determines how the story will end. After the climax comes the resolution, when the dust settles and the audience gets a glimpse of the result -- the crocodile munching on its treat, Cinderella moving her summer clothes into Charming's half of the closet...

If we start our play at the climax, the audience will be lost. They'll see a crazed princess storming into a bedroom, but they won't know who she is or why they should care. There will be no built-up tension, no suspense, just a bloodbath in the royal bed. And the play will be over almost as soon as it has begun. Instead, what many playwrights do is to start the play a little bit before the climax. The play begins with a situation that has a lot of tension already built up. Charming and Petunia have been messing around for months and now are plotting to poison Cinderella's soup. Cinderella has noticed that Charming's been less charming than usual and wants the Fairy Godmother to spy on him. The play begins. Tensions are already high. Tempers are short. The situation is explosive. And the audience gets to watch it all blow up.

Show the story in actions and speech

"A silent tear rolls down Cinderella's cheek as she pulls a long black hair off Charming's pillow. Thoughts of murder burn in her mind as she tosses the hair into the fireplace. Two years ago, when she caught the Prince behind the barn with a milkmaid, he promised that he would never stray again. She believed him then, but she won't be betrayed a second time."

Sure, but a theater audience can't see any of that.

What do they see? Cinderella leans over the pillow, then walks over to the fire and holds out her hand.

- They can't see the silent tear.
- They certainly can't see a single black hair.
- They don't know what thoughts or memories are in her head.
This isn't a movie, where the camera can zoom in. And this isn't a novel, where the narrator can describe the character's thoughts or fill in background information (some plays do have narrators, but I don't recommend using this option, which can seem old-fashioned nowadays).

Instead of a hair, we could have Cinderella find Petunia's nightgown. Not very subtle, but at least the audience could see it.

Or instead of crying silently, we could have her call the fairy godmother into the room and tell her about the hair. By turning Cinderella's discovery and thoughts into speech, we let the audience in on them.

As a playwright, your main tools are speech and actions (and by actions, I mean ones that the audience can see from the back of the theater). Is Prince Charming a nymphomaniac? Is Cinderella a ruthless social climber who will trample anyone in her path? Think about what words and actions will let the audience know. Is Cinderella becoming suspicious? Is Charming plotting to get rid of her? Show it with words and actions.

**How to write a script - Pare it down**

Should we give Cinderella's stepsisters a little part in the play? Bring in the Prince's friends? The royal army? Should we add a subplot with an attack on the palace from a neighboring kingdom?

Let's think twice before we complicate things too much. Instead, we should be trying to simplify, to pare things down.

If our play contains too many moving parts, it's going to be harder for us, the playwrights, to manage everything successfully. Having too many characters, costume changes, and scene changes can also make the play more expensive and difficult to produce.

**How to write a script - Write and rewrite**

Some writers spend months or even years developing ideas, jotting down notes, writing character profiles, brainstorming. They like to know where they're headed before beginning. Others write as a form of exploration, discovering the path as they go. Once they see where they end up, they start a second draft, and maybe more drafts, revising until they get it all right.

There is no single approach to writing that works for everyone. But some general advice:

- Read and watch lots of plays if you want to write them.
- Write regularly, even if you don't feel inspired. If you sit down every morning at eight o'clock to write, sooner or later, the inspiration will come. On the other
hand, if you wait for inspiration before so much as picking up a pen, you might have a very long wait.

- Don't expect your first draft to be your final one. Things almost never come out perfectly on the first try. So don't be scared by the blank page. Write down something. Then come back and improve it. Reading your dialogue out loud will help you hear where revision is needed. Are there places that sound unnatural? Conversations that move too slowly? Parts that will be difficult for an actor to pronounce or an audience to understand?

If you are following the first piece of advice and reading a lot of plays, then you have a general idea of what a script looks like. But be aware that the formatting of published plays is a bit different from the formatting you should use for your script. You can find a detailed guide to script format on the playwright Jon Dorf's website, Playwriting 101.

Or, let a free software format it for you. Celtx includes a free editor for stage play scripts. Note that this is set by default to international format, but if you want American format, you can change the setting easily.

How to write a script - Further reading

For a complete introduction to writing a play, check out Louis E. Catron's book, The Elements of Playwriting.

You'll find resources and information for professional playwrights on the Dramatists Guild of America website.

Articles for further discussion:


Teacher Evaluation Form for *Morningside*

Name:___________________________________ School:________________________________________

What is your overall reaction to the production?

How do you feel about the production values of the performance (costumes, set, performers, etc?)

How did your students react to the production? Also, please have your students fill out the enclosed student evaluation forms- we want to hear from them too!

Please comment on the educational value of the program.

What is your overall reaction to the question and answer (talk-back) session?

How did you hear about New Stage’s production of *Morningside*?

What other plays would you like your students to see?

We want to hear from you! Please help us by sharing your thoughts with us.

Please return this form with any additional comments to:
Sharon Miles, Education Director- New Stage Theatre
1100 Carlisle Street, Jackson, MS. 39202 or email at smiles@newstagetheatre.com
Student Evaluation Form - Morningside

Name: __________________________ School: ____________________________

What was your overall reaction to the play?

What was your reaction to the production values of the play (costumes, scenery, acting, etc.)?

What was your favorite part of the play?

Did you learn anything from this production? If so, what?

What other stories would you enjoy seeing staged by live actors?

Other comments and observations:

Please return this form with any additional comments to:
Sharon Miles, Education Director- New Stage Theatre
1100 Carlisle Street, Jackson, MS. 39202 or email at smiles@newstagetheatre.com