

Wahlprogramm

A BRIGHT ROOM CALLED DAY

BY TONY KUSHNER

DIRECTED BY MARLOWE MITCHELL

A LEEDS ARTS CENTRE PRODUCTION

What do you do when your world is spiralling out of control?

Berlin, 1933. In a modest apartment, the laughter and political discussions of a group of friends mingle as the shadow of tyranny creeps closer. Years later, the questions still burn - when the world changes towards prejudice and injustice, do we resist, comply, or look away?



“You know, upon our German stages, Each man puts on just what he may; So spare me not upon this day ... So in this narrow house of boarded space Creation’s fullest circle go to pace And walk, with leisured speed, your spell Past Heaven, through the Earth, to Hell.”

—From the Prologue in the Theatre, Goethe’s *Faust*, translated by Walter Arndt

“The Republic had too much in common with its enemy; the spirit of revenge for Versailles, the fear of communism ... but above all the Republic was aware of its own tediousness. The people wanted theater.”

—Heinrich Mann, quoted in *The Brothers Mann* by Nigel Hamilton

“You’d be surprised how much being a good actor pays off.”

—Ronald Reagan, May 1, 1984

Running Time:
1 Hour 50 Minutes
+ 20 Minute Interval

Content Warning:

The production contains intense political themes, references to fascism, war and emotional distress



Magnus Hirschfeld (at right with glasses and bushy mustache, holding the hand of his lover, Karl Giese) at a costume party at the Institute of Sexual Science, 1920. Credit: Photo courtesy of Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft e.V., Berlin.

CONTEXT

A Bright Room Called Day is a story written in the 1980s by a young playwright named Tony Kushner (*Angels in America*) who was responding to the similarities between early 1930s Germany and Reaganism.

Flash-forward to 2016 and Kushner realised that the slow burn of increasingly right-wing politics that Reagan had adopted had been fanned into a frenzy of far-right white nationalism. This was under a cult of personality formed around a man who simply enjoyed the power to make people do whatever he wanted them to – just like the rise of fascism in early 1930s. That man is currently President, unfortunately making this play very timely.



German students and Nazi SA plunder the library of Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, Director of the Institute for Sexual Research in Berlin, 1933.

Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the National Archives and Records Administration.

This production is a never-before-seen iteration, placing us in the here and now in Britain and asking: Who is our modern scapegoat? Who is fanning the flames at home? And are we in a similar moment in time where we need to ask ourselves “What would we do if it was the early 1930s and a political party told us to be afraid of *People Who Aren’t Like Us?*”

HISTORY

In 1933 Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and promptly began a dictatorship that lasted over a decade.

But the history of Germany's descent into far-right extremism began some years before that, with their defeat in World War One. The subsequent inflation, coupled with enforced "payment of reparations" to the allied powers, destroyed the German economy and sent the country into a tailspin of ever more divided political ideals. From the fractured leftists, communists, and Marxists, the feminist and queer rights advocates, the centrists trying to appease everyone, to the increased right-wing presence promising a return to the good old days, Germany was a country on the brink.



Magnus Hirschfeld (right) and Li Shiu Tong (left) in Nice, ca. 1930s.

Source: Mangus-Hirschfeld.de

The time before Nazism paradoxically saw a rise in equal rights marches and protests, as well as a thriving artistic and filmic output which would go on to inspire Hollywood due to the mass emigration of artists to the USA in the 30s and 40s.

So how did the Nazis get a foot in the door? They played to peoples' fears of new, multicultural "degenerate" behaviours, sacrificing the most marginalised along the way. The first overt victims were disabled people, with an estimated 300,000 murdered in 1939 as they tested out techniques that were used in the Holocaust. Then there was the famous book-burnings including research from The Institute of Sexology, which pioneered queer rights and gender-affirming care. The founder, Magnus Hirschfeld, was guilty of the two irredeemable crimes of being Jewish and gay.

HISTORY



*Toni Ebel and Charlotte Charlaque, two trans jewish holocaust survivors, 1933
Ragnar Ahlstedt.*

Source: Photo courtesy of Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft e.V., Berlin

All along, the Jewish population was the main target of the Nazis, building on globally ingrained antisemitic violence and conspiracy theories. Many Jewish people, including the post-Holocaust philosopher Hannah Arendt who coined “The Banality Of Evil,” saw the writing on the wall. She fled Germany after being arrested by the Gestapo in 1933 and survived. Millions did not.

It’s important that this genocide did not appear in a vacuum. Its politics were inspired by antisemitism, segregation, racism, ultranationalism and eugenics, and endorsed by many politicians around the world until they realised that Germany was planning the mass invasion of their own countries. The effects of the Holocaust continue to affect us today, because the tenets of it are still practised.

This play tells us that history is *not* a circle, but that the only way to not repeat ourselves is to be in interaction with this past and to not throw away the people that are deemed less important than ourselves. In short, we have to act to help one another.

“Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.” - Martin Niemöller

For further reading see “New Research Reveals How the Nazis Targeted Transgender People” (Laurie Marhoefer, 2023), “The Nazis’ First Victims Were the Disabled” (Kenny Fries, 2017) and “The Fascist Sympathies of Britain’s Aristocracy” (Adam J Sacks, 2020).

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

I read this play in 2022 in a sweaty, hot New York apartment rented by a friend of mine, and it seemed like the world had gone mad. My friend told me to read this play to make sense of things (Hi Kate!).

I grew up in a recession, in a time in which politics seemed to be an ever-increasingly hard line between right and left, and in which people like myself (transgender) have become one of the media's and politics' favourite volleyballs to punt around alongside fearmongering immigration stories.



This play, about a group of misfit artists of various kinds, sounded like me and my friends, when you're up late and the world feels overwhelming, and you don't want to go to bed again, because there's always more you need to get off your chest.

It is also, actually, two plays in one. When Tony Kushner rewrote the play as a response to Trump in 2016 he cut out some of my favourite parts of the original, namely the story of a Jewish woman in 1990 who – after the fall of the Berlin Wall – travels to Berlin to make sense of the past, hoping that it will spur her into action in her own life. We look to the past to find clues about our present, hoping that we'll do better, that the fear won't stop us from acting, that the things we see in the media today won't get worse.

In New York in 2022 I felt some hope that things would be okay. That I had the ability to move things, just ever so slightly, in my own way, towards kindness and community. So in directing this play, I hope to offer some of that to you.

- Marlowe Mitchell

MEET THE TEAM

Cast (in speaking order)

Annabella Gotchling -	Vic Bingham
Paulinka Erdnuss -	Emily Guy
Vealtnine Husz -	Jack Pickup
Gregor (Baz) Bazwald -	Jay Lockwood
Agnes Eggling -	Lauren Wellburn
Zillah Katz -	Laura Marshall
Roland -	Theo Devine
Xillah -	Parul Hiran
Die Alte -	Margaret Savage
Rosa Malek -	Imogen O'Connor
Emil Traum -	Spike Marshall
Gottfried Swetts -	Jennifer Becker

Production Team

Director -	Marlowe Mitchell
Assistant Director -	Britt Harrison
Producer -	Enya Lucas
Stage Management -	Hannah Booth
Set & Props Designer -	Mia Thomsen
Props Team -	Matthew Brady, James Flood, Charlotte Riley
Radio Props Technician -	Aiman Salehuddin
Wardrobe Team -	Anna Turner, Zoe Humphreys, Zoe Freedman, Maria Kwater, Ananya Parikh, Jo Scott
Make-up Artist -	Caitlin Schippers
Lighting Designer & Operator -	Enya Lucas
Sound & Projections Operator -	Jerry Dunne & Steve Fryatt
Projections Designer -	Marlowe Mitchell & Logan Arthur
Mentor -	Zoe Freedman
Jewish & Historical Consultant -	Maya Delayahu
Intimacy Consultant & Movement Coordinator -	Sophie Clement
Rehearsal Prompts -	James Flood, Simon Henson, Ananya Parikh
Front of House Team -	Georgia Becker, Shirley Broadbent and LAC members
Publicity Director -	Spike Marshall
Publicity Team -	Emily Dewsnap, George Phillips, Lauren Viligiardi, Jonah Wild
Programme & Flyer Designer -	Jonah Wild & Enya Lucas
Photographer -	Mark Hillyer
Emotional support dog -	Snoopy

BIOGRAPHIES



Jennifer Becker - Since successfully auditioning for the National Youth Theatre 52 years ago Jen's acting career has been sporadic but she is delighted to have found LAC and to make her acting debut for them in such a great play with such a committed and supportive ensemble.

Vic Bingham - Vic studied theatre at Kingston University and more recently with Act Up North and Union Management. She has been with LAC for 6 years now undertaking a number of roles both behind the scenes and on stage.



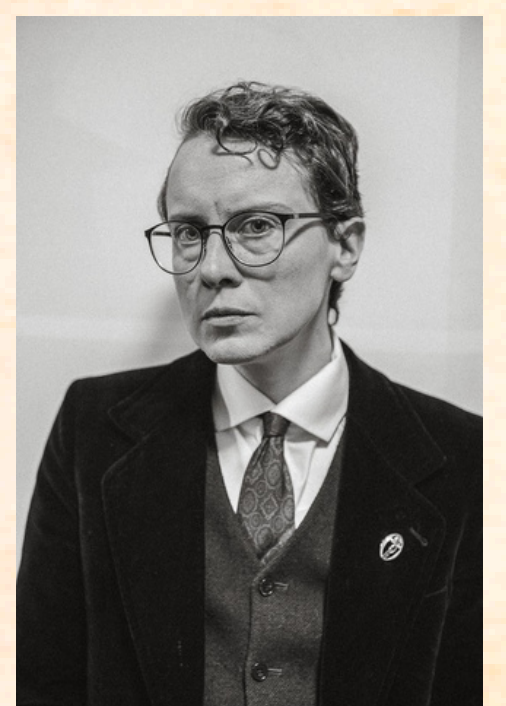
Theo Devine - Theo's passion for telling stories on stage started with the RSC as a child. Theo has recently become a member of LAC after studying acting at drama college. He is enjoying learning German for his role as Roland, a character who, much like Theo, is trying to explore his new-found freedom in the world.

Emily Guy - Making her LAC debut, this is Emily's first time on stage in 15 years. She is grateful to the cast for their warm welcome, and thrilled to play a glamorous character whose flaws feel powerfully relevant today.



Parul Hirani - After living in multiple countries, Parul returns to the UK stage, and it truly feels like coming home. She connects strongly with Xillah's journey through change, identity, and uncertainty - something that echoes her own experiences and the world we're living in today.

Jay Lockwood - Jay has been a member of LAC since 2023 and has appeared on stage in Death In Character, A Christmas Carol, and in The Wryters' Comedy Hour on Chapel FM. He has thoroughly enjoyed playing Baz and has been inspired by the character's ability to be true to himself and stay fabulous in the face of adversity.



BIOGRAPHIES



Laura Marshall - Laura has been a member of LAC for nearly 3 years, having had various roles on and off-stage. She loves the magic of theatre, and hates Donald Trump, so is very thankful to be a part of this wonderful production with the amazingly talented cast and crew.

Spike Marshall - Usually found directing for LAC, writing for Treadlight Theatre, or producing sketch comedy at Chapel FM, Spike is trading the comforting shadow of backstage for the spotlight. Inspired by the play's call to resistance, he's staged a coup against his own stage fright to join a cast tackling something that very much needs tackling.



Imogen O'Connor - Since Imogen graduated from drama college, she is excited to get back on the stage and work with a new bunch of talented people. Inspired by Malek's will to fight and challenge those around her, Imogen is excited to bring her to life.

Jack Pickup - Jack is a new actor and this is his second production. He has a keen interest in modern history with a family that have pursued careers in history and hopes to make them all proud.



Margaret Savage - Margaret is a long time member of LAC. She has played various roles over the years but these days is found mainly doing costume. She is looking forward to working around the challenge of Die Alte... Who is she?

Lauren Wellburn - Lauren spent much of medical school performing around placements, including stints at the Edinburgh Fringe. Now she swaps the bright lights of her consultation room for A Bright Room Called Day, where, as Agnes, she recognises the same impacts on ordinary people navigating an uncertain world.





CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

- Annabella Gotchling** - Communist Party member, artist and graphic designer.
- Paulinka Erdnuss** - Minor rising star in the German film industry.
- Vealtninc Husz** - Hungarian film cameraman who once worked in the Russian film industry.
- Gregor (Baz) Bazwald** - Works at the Berlin Institute for Human Sexuality.
- Agnes Eggling** - Bit-part player in the German film industry.
- Zillah Katz** - Newly-arrived in Berlin from Leeds in the 1990s, now squatting in Agnes's 1932 flat
- Roland** - Recently arrived in the reunified Berlin from his childhood home in what was East Germany.
- Xillah** - Someone watching the play, in 2026, with the audience.
- Rosa Malek** - Minor functionary in the German Communist Party.
- Emil Traum** - Minor functionary in the German Communist Party.
- Die Alte** - A mystery.
- Gottfried Swetts** - The Devil, possibly.



MORE ABOUT LAC

LEEDS ARTS CENTRE was formed in 1945 as an amateur society to encourage and foster interest in the arts.

Originally it comprised drama groups (including children's theatre), a fine arts group and musical, literary and film sections and was based in the Civic Theatre (now Leeds City Museum).

In 2005, Leeds Arts Centre moved to the Carriageworks where we now present four plays every season (usually in February, March/April, May/June and October/November).

We are a friendly society working together to maintain the high standard of our productions and new members are always welcome - with or without any previous experience. We hold regular playreadings and social events and aim to give all members the opportunity to try their hand at all aspects of theatre-making.

We are a registered charity and non profit-making organisation. Our members range in age from 18 to 80+ and come from a wide range of backgrounds. If you are interested in joining, please speak to a member of our friendly team. Alternatively, you can find out more by visiting our website at www.leedsartcentre.org.uk where you can complete an application form in the "Join Us" section.

Leeds Arts Centre is part of Leeds Community Arts Network (LCAN). Its current member groups are Cosmopolitan Players, KAOS Productions, LAOS Musical Theatre Company, Leeds Arts Centre, Leeds Children's Theatre, Leeds Gilbert & Sullivan Society, LIDOS, Leeds Writers Circle, Leeds Youth Opera, St. Mary's Youth Theatre and Whitkirk Arts Guild. For more information, visit leedscan.org.uk

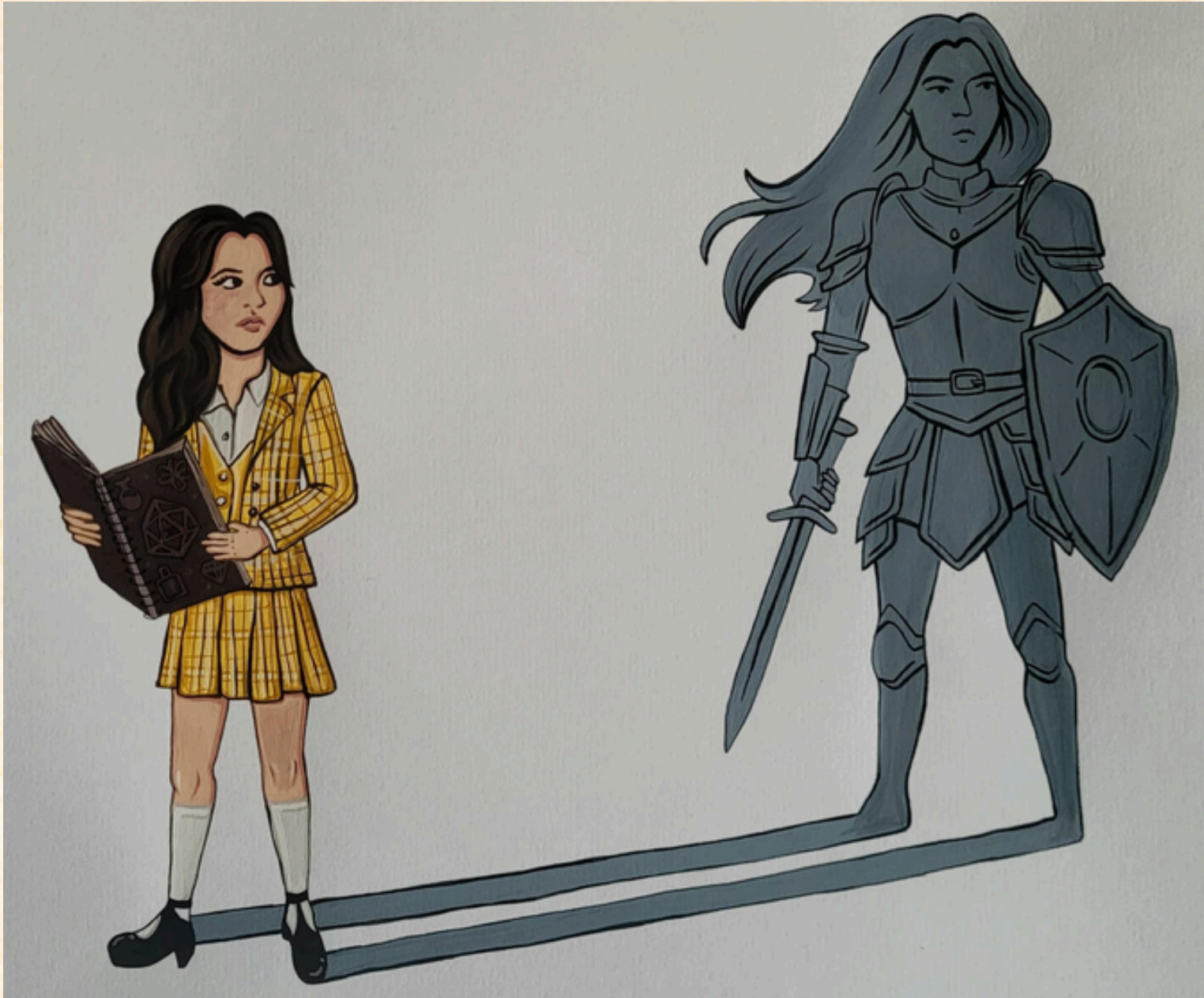
We have a wide range of high quality costumes available to hire at competitive rates. For more information, please visit our website:



UPCOMING LAC SHOWS

She Kills Monsters - 14th October - 17th October 2026 Directed by Chelsea Issott

She Kills Monsters by Qui Nguyen follows Agnes Evans, a young woman grieving the sudden death of her teenage sister, Tilly.



While sorting through Tilly's belongings, Agnes discovers a Dungeons & Dragons campaign her sister wrote and decides to play it with the help of Chuck, a quirky dungeon master. As the game unfolds, Agnes is drawn into a vivid fantasy world of monsters, warriors and demons that mirrors Tilly's inner life. Through this adventure, Agnes learns who Tilly truly was (brilliant, brave and queer) and confronts her own regrets, guilt and unresolved grief.

Blending pop culture, comedy, and heartfelt drama, **She Kills Monsters** explores storytelling as a way to process loss, celebrate identity and find connection after tragedy.

God of Carnage - 3rd February - 6th February 2027 Directed by Spike Marshall

Yasmina Reza's incendiary comedy storms into Leeds in February 2027. Two couples attempt to find an amicable solution to their children's playground squabble, but find being civilised is harder than it seems. A tense descent into the seething water of polite politics.

The Athenian Verdict - June 2027 Directed by Frank Stott

In Ancient Greece, the Gods reign supreme but when they order a man to kill his own mother, one of the Divine falters. In this adaptation of Aeschylus' Oresteia, Athena must abandon her father's law to prevent the spilling of more blood - The Athenian Verdict.

LeedsCAN PRESENTS

LIDOS - **We Will Rock You** [24th - 27th June - Carriageworks Main]

Leeds Young Creatives - **Matilda** [11th - 18th July - Slung Low and Leeds Grammar School]

Leeds Children's Theatre - **Puppet** [5th - 8th November - Carriageworks Main]

REFERENCES

This production incorporates and adapts archival footage, imagery and source material from the following:

Alamy Stock Photos; BBC Archive; Bridgeman Images; CBC News; Daily News Video; Getty Images; Hitler Archive; Magnus Hirschfeld Gesellschaft; Man With A Movie Camera, 1929, Dziga Vertov, VUFKU; Middle East Eye; NAC, Narodowe Archiwum; Cyfrowe; Pathé; The Guardian; The Holocaust Explained; The Holy Mountain, 1926, directed by Arnold Fanck, UFA; The Internet Archive Public Domain; The White Hell of Pitz Palu, 1929, directed by Arnold Fanck and G. W. Pabst, UFA; World Documentary Archives

Sound has been obtained from the following Freesound sources:

COMCam 8mm Movie Projector by KVV Audio; Slow Grrr by be-steele; knock.wav by someonesilly; Wood Fire Burning 01 by PoundSoundUK

This production incorporates musical works and archival recordings from the following sources:

Alfred Hugenberg Reichstag Election Speech (1932); Angelic Choir; Ben Berlin & His Orchestra Broadway Melody (1929); Ben Berlin Orchester Erst kommt ein grosses Fragezeichen (1930); Ben Berlin Tanz-Orchester Schöne Frau wo wohnst du? (1926); Gustav Mahler Symphony No. 2 in C Minor; "Resurrection" J. S. Bach Sonata No. 1 in G Minor; BWV 1001 performed by Joseph Szigeti (1946 recording); Marlene Dietrich Falling in Love Again (German version, archival recording); Marlene Dietrich Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuß auf Liebe eingestellt (Falling in Love Again); Mein Berlin.

THANKS



With thanks to our:

Photographer True North Photography, Mark Hillyer (Truenorthuk.com)

Venues All Hallows, Carriageworks Theatre, Chapel FM,
Fox & Newt Pub, Slung Low

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This amateur production is presented by arrangement with The Marton Agency Inc.