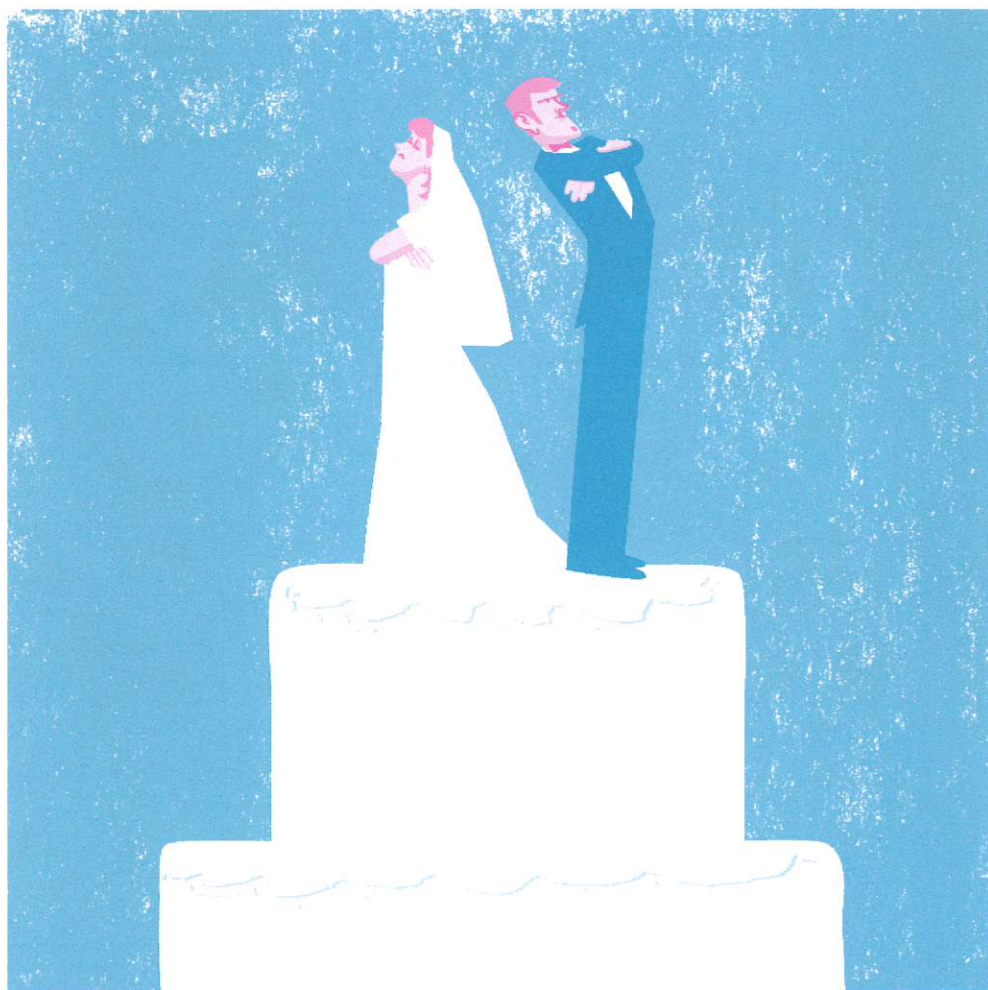


Houseboat Honeymoon

Written by
Joel Bree

Directed by
Eric Samuelsen

Nov. 12–22; Dec. 2–6, 2008
Pardoe Theatre
Harris Fine Arts Center



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Cast

Rich	Doug Kaufman
Linsey	Leslie Hiatt
Brandon	Peter Layland
James	Cory Minor
Sharon	Emily Foster
Henry	Nathan Meigs
Seth	Zack Elzey
Ron	Ariseal Rivera
Jeanie	Alice Johnson
Mom	Haley Flanders
Grandma	Ashley Bonner
Mary Anne	Kelly Hennessey
Ted	Brock Kannan
Dad	Merrill Matheson
Grandpa	Moises Lopez

Production Staff

Director	Eric Samuelson
Dramaturg	Laura Tolsma
Production Stage Manager	Summer Lewis
Scenic Designers	Seven Nielsen, Adisti Regar
Costume Designers	Haleh Risdana, Maria Schulte
Lighting Designer	Anna Kron
Sound Designer	Christina Tibbetts
Makeup and Hair Designers	Haleh Risdana, Kim Koka
Assistant Scenic Designer	Dick Merklings
Assistant Costume Designer	Orly Ruiz
Assistant Makeup and Hair Designer	Emily Jacobson
Assistant Stage Manager	Chelsea Abinante
Sound Engineer	Troy Streeter
Technical Crew	TMA 360R Students
Makeup & Hair Running Crews	TMA 367 Students
Fight Choreographer	Matthew Carlin

Director's Note

My family is Norwegian, and growing up I always slept covered by a “dyne”, a Norwegian feather covering. It was toasty warm and I loved it. My wife and I got a queen-sized dyne as a wedding gift, and I was sure my wife would like it as much as I did. It was quite a shock when, after one night, my wife quietly put the dyne away, and made our bed with blankets. That was that: the dyne was permanently retired, and today, after twenty-seven happy years together, I really don't miss it.

Marriage is about that kind of compromise and accommodation; realizing that the way one family did things isn't necessarily the “right” way for them to be done. And from the moment Joel Bree began working on what would become *Houseboat Honeymoon* in my playwriting classes, I sensed that he was on to a great theme—young married couples adjusting to the eccentricities and foibles of each other's families.

Joel also has a great sense of comedy, a great sense of how to build a gag, how to sustain comedic action. As our cast and production team began working on this play, we had two goals. First, we wanted the play to explore with some insight the idea of two young people compromising and growing together into what we expect will be a loving, fulfilling marriage, based on equality and shared goals and values. Second, we wanted to show just how comically absurd some extended families can be: the aunt into New Age religions, the uncle immersed in conspiracy theories, the pregnant sister-in-law in constant false labor, the obnoxious rich uncle, the aunt with the ubiquitous camera, recording everything. Presiding

over the whole menagerie, is tactless and iron-willed Grandma, who no-one dares cross. Inevitably, of course, our bride, Linsey, crosses her. The result, we think, is a kind of barely controlled comic mayhem, especially when Grandpa, who hates boats, panics on realizing his family has forced him aboard one.

What do we call it? A family farce? Newly-wed slapstick? Whatever we call it, we've had a blast working on it. We hope you laugh a lot, and perhaps, agree together to retire the “dyne”. Blankets can be just as comfortable, and they're sure a lot easier to launder.

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Dramaturg's Note

On my grandma's couch there is a pillow embroidered with the saying: "My Family Tree Is Full of Nuts." You may laugh at this saying, but you also might agree with it. This play shows a nutty family doing nutty things to such a degree that we can sit back and rejoice in the fact that, no we are not the craziest family out there! At the same time, comedy allows us to relate to this family, learn from the mistakes they make and thus improve our own family relationships.

Why are we, as a society, so entertained by dysfunctional families? It seems like dysfunction in familial relationships is one of our favorite topics. Just tune in to daytime talk shows, newspaper columns, or radio shows and you'll see my point. Most TV sitcoms revolve around families that are dysfunctional with personal flaws and poor communication at their core. Comedy is founded in eccentricity, going almost over the top yet still remaining believable. It is rooted in realism, yet is larger than life. This family is a little crazier than a family would be, the boat is bigger than a typical houseboat would be, and James gets hurt more than is humanly possible. And yet, we are able to suspend our disbelief just enough to relate and be entertained. As French philosopher Bergson said, "Laughter is, above all, a corrective." This kind of comedy allows us to distance ourselves, laughing at what is being done on stage in a comfortable arena. It is after the show that we should reflect on the ideas presented and see if we have any family dysfunction that we could fix. Are we selfish like Grandma is with her vacation? Do we communicate and resolve differences in our marriage like Rich and Linsey? While we come to the theatre for entertainment and a few good laughs, comedy allows us to reflect on ourselves in a safe way by distancing our emotions with laughter.

This play has a realistic design. The production elements attempt to mirror life exactly. We watch the play as a conscious audience, observers of the crazy situations the characters get themselves into, in a realistic setting. We can separate ourselves just enough to observe the comedic situations and then come back to our reality where application can be made.

You may have a lot of nuts in your family, but rest assured you are not alone. We can all relate to these wacky characters to some degree, and that is what makes this play so great. Laugh and enjoy the show...because while you are laughing, some of these eccentricities might just hit home.



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Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for inclusion at the KCACTF regional festival and can also be considered for invitation to the KCACTF national festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC in the spring of 2009.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, BYU Theatre and Media Arts is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

Meet the Company

Ashley Jean Bonner
Grandma

From Cedar Park, Texas. Junior in the BFA acting program. This is Ashley's BYU debut. Recent credits include Maggie in *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, and the Sour Kangaroo in *Seussical! The Musical*.

Zack Elzey
Seth

From Cedar Hills, Utah. Currently a second grader at Deerfield Elementary. Credits include *Honk Jr.*, *The Little Mermaid's Adventures with the Pirates of the Caribbean*, *Hill Cumorah Pageant*, and the BYU film *Onward Alone*.

Haley Flanders
Mom

From Grayson, Georgia. Junior majoring in theatre arts studies with an emphasis in playwriting and a minor in music. Recent credits include Joanna in *The Julie Play* (New Play Project) and Gertrude, a Doo-Wop Girl in a BYU Mask Club production of *The Little Shop of Horrors*.

Emily Foster
Sharon

From Las Vegas, Nevada. Emily is a theatre major with recent credits as Polina in BYU's production of *The Seagull*, Greek Chorus in *Medea* with Pinnacle Acting Company, and Elizabeth in *Six Degrees of Separation*. Emily also recently acted in *Method*: a short film selected as Salt Lake City's Over All Best film of this summer's 48 Hour Film Project.

Kelly Marie Hennessey
Mary Ann

From Springville, Utah. A sophomore in pre-acting. Recent credits include Ida in *See How They Run*, Minnie Fay in *Hello, Dolly!*, Brenda in *Smokey Joe's Cafe*, Little Sally in *Urinetown*, Timoune in *Once on This Island*, and Herself in the Canadian tour of *Comedy Tonight*.

Leslie Hiatt
Linsey

From Mesa, Arizona. Junior in music dance theatre. Recent credits include BYU's *Berlin* and Rizzo in *Grease*.

Alice Johnson
Jeanie

From Price, Utah. Junior in the BFA acting program. Recent credits include student plays such as Augusta/Mrs. Balike in *Drums in the Night*, and Muriel in *Ah, Wilderness!* Favorite film Credits include Sarah in *Lair Lords*, Madeline in *Speechless*, and Jenny in *Fear Itself*.

Brock Kannan
Ted

From Franklin, Virginia. Sophomore in music dance theatre. This is Brock's BYU debut. Favorite roles include Samuel Chase in *1776*; The Baker in *Into the Woods*; and Snoopy in *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*.

Doug Kaufman
Rich

From Monroe, Connecticut. Junior in public relations with a minor in theatre studies. Recent credits include Snug in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, TD Fitzgerald in *Papa Married a Mormon*, Pippin in *Great Expectations*, all at BYU, and Algernon in *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

Peter Layland
Brandon

From Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Freshman planning on majoring in music dance theatre or acting. Favorite credits include Schlomo Metzenbaum in *Fame*, Gaston in *Beauty and the Beast*, and Officer Lockstock in *Urinetown*.

Moises Lopez
Grandpa

From Herriman, Utah. Sophomore in theatre arts studies. This is Moises's BYU debut. Favorite credits include Eros in *Metamorphoses*, Moonface Martin in *Anything Goes*, and The Madman in *Arabian Nights*.

Merrill Matheson
Dad

From Provo, Utah. Senior in theatre arts studies with an emphasis in acting and minor in ballroom dance. Credits: BYU student plays, including *The Little Shop of Horrors*, *Addicted*, *The Lion in Winter*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, as well as several student and professional short films. Merrill was a member of ComedySportz, an improvisational comedy troupe, and an associate producer at BYU Broadcasting. He is a voice-over artist and writes and produces the sketch comedy show *Chez Comedez*. He has toured with ballroom dance teams from BYU and UVU.

Cory Minor
James

From Burlington, Connecticut. Sophomore in pre-acting and hoping to minor in animation. This is Cory's BYU debut. Recent credits include Arpad U/S in *She Loves Me* and Schlomo Metzenbaum in *Fame*.

Nathan Meigs
Henry

From Lehi, Utah. Nathan is ten years old and in the fifth grade. Recent credits include Kurt in *The Sound of Music*, Cat in the Hat in *Seussical Jr.*, Scott in *Edwina Jr.*, Pinocchio in *No Strings Attached* and Ensemble in *Oklahoma!*

Arisael Rivera
Ron

From the Bronx, New York. Graduate from BYU in theatre arts studies. Recent credits include supervising director for New Play Project's *Fire & Rain*, Alfonso in *Esperanza Rising*, Brad in *Simpler Than That*, and Egeus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

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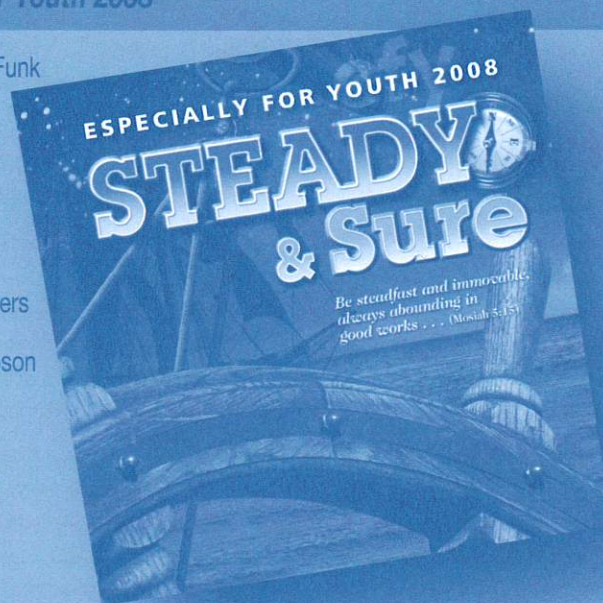
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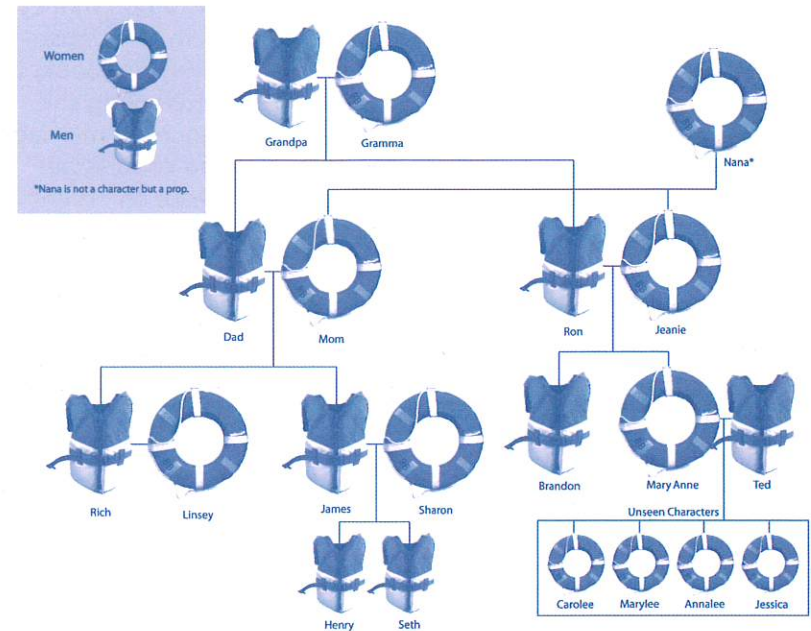
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Houseboat Honeymoon

A new play by Joel Bree



Study Guide by: Laura Tolsma, Dramaturg

The Lovely Institution of Marriage

Fun Fact: About 85% of Americans are expected to marry sometime in their lives.



- The average couple will spend \$3,805 on its honeymoon
- June is the most popular month to get married
- The average couple spends a total of \$28,704 on its wedding
- 2.2 million Marriages take place in the United States annually. That breaks down to 5,918 a day
- The average engagement ring costs \$4,332... the average man's wedding ring costs: \$569
- Average age at first marriage is 26 for women, 28 for men
- \$1,266 is the average amount a bride spends on her wedding dress

- Average engagement time is 16 months

Marriage + BYU

Let's face it: BYU students are marriage-crazed. Come on, you know you came to the play because "Honeymoon" was in the title. The common phrase, "Ring by spring or your tuition money back" is an anthem for spouse-seeking coeds. Even Facebook, the popular social networking site, has become a venue for marriage and dating. When couples get engaged they create an "event" on Facebook announcing their engagement to collect addresses for invitations. For the single BYU students who are feeling left out, there are any number of Facebook clubs they can join such as these:

"Girls who are planning on graduating without being married...."

"A Coalition to Prevent Quickie Marriages!"

"Why yes I do go to BYU! NO!!! I didn't go to get my M.R.S. Degree!!!!!!"

"I will graduate from BYU SINGLE -- and I am okay with that! :)"

"I attend BYU and *surprise* I won't be married by the time I graduate"

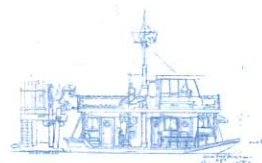
Ask Yourself... We get to watch Rich and Linsey adjust to their marriage on stage. How do you think they do?

Preparing a Production

Fun Fact: The most popular holidays to spend on a Houseboat? Halloween and New Year's Eve.

Typically, Student written plays are performed in the smaller Margetts Theater. Because this play required a large set, the Pardoe Theater became the perfect venue for our play.

Here are some of the first sketches of the houseboat set:



Rendering by Seven Nielson

The set had to be scaled down to fit in to the budget for the show.

Ask Yourself... How does the set help tell the story?

Costuming a character:

Haleh and her team of assistants decided to costume the characters by family, using similar fashion tastes and colors to link family members together. Mary Anne thinks she is Grandma's favorite....can



you see a costuming relationship between Mary Anne and Grandma?

A few words from Haleh Risdana, Costume Designer:



"The one of Grandpa all puny with a fisherman's hat was my first sketch; but as time progressed, and I read the script more

cautiously, I realized Grandpa is not the push over type, at all. He carries his stance well, so I opted to negate the more feeble look and go with an image of Kirk Douglas I found in a magazine. His double-knit mint green polyester pants and complimentary red shirt & matching socks were a no brainer for me. I mean who wouldn't love to wear fabric that melts!"

"Houseboat Honeymoon reminded me of the antics I used to witness when I watched the Carol Burnet show..... It's not so much that we want ugly, it's that we want to show the comedic dysfunction of each character and how their style reflects it."

Fun Fact: Sharon is made to look pregnant by wearing a "pregnancy pad." It is a formed pillow with straps made in the costume shop.

The Journey of Houseboat Honeymoon

Fun fact: Do you know how to spell? It is a playwright who does playwriting.

An aspiring playwright begins his or her journey by enrolling in **TMA 251: Beginning Playwriting**. In this class the fundamentals of playwriting are taught. The assignments include writing two ten-minute plays, and one longer one-act play.

Joel Bree took this class and completed a one-act he entitled *Houseboat Honeymoon*. In early 2007 this one-act was selected to participate in WDA*.



While in WDA, a group of students collaborated over his work, helping him with improvisation and feedback. Characters were fine-tuned and a second act to the play was written.

But the play wasn't finished yet. Joel admitted that the end of the play was the hardest to write.

He went through all sorts of different drafts that were tested out on the WDA students. In one version, Linsey was rumored to be pregnant, another involved Sharon giving birth to the twins on deck. One of the original drafts had Ted and Linsey teaming up to get off the boat together. And yet another had Grandpa talking to Linsey to help her see Grandma in a different light. At the end of the course, the play was performed in a staged reading† where Joel admitted it was "the first time I ever heard an audience laugh at something I had written." It wasn't until several drafts later that he came up with the version used in this production.

Ask Yourself... What do you think of the ending? How would you end it if you were writing this play?

*WDA stands for Writer/Dramaturg/Actor Workshop- a class at BYU where students collaborate on selected student-written scripts to prepare them for production.

†Staged readings are informal performances of new plays. They involve actors with scripts reading the play with little or no blocking to receive feedback from the audience on completion.

More Revisions

"Happiness is having a large, loving, caring, close-knit family in another city."
-George Burns

Here is a section from an earlier draft of the play...

Linsey: You haven't said anything for hours, now you want to talk?

Rich: I've been sitting there thinking and I can't remember if our first date was that terrible movie or the tractor pull.

Linsey: For our first date we made dinner together and after five minutes it turned into a huge food fight.

Rich: That's right. You looked so gross.

Linsey: You're the one who mashed bananas into my hair. My roommates were so mad at me. I don't remember going to a tractor pull.

Rich: You don't? Me neither. But there was that terrible movie that Brandon recommended.

Linsey: It was so awful. I'll never watch another Steven Seagal movie ever.

Throughout the writing process, the characters' personalities deepened becoming more lovable and eccentric. The character of Grandpa went through one such refining process. Joel decided that it would be funny to tell the reason why Grandpa was afraid of getting on the boat, as told from different perspectives from characters in the play. In search of ideas, he turned to the students in WDA. They decided to brainstorm ideas through improvisation. Each student took on a character in the play and came up with a reason

why Grandpa was afraid to get on the boat. They then acted it out with a student playing Linsey asking various family members about Grandpa's fear. It was through this class improvisation that Joel got ideas to enhance Grandpa's character.

In the winter of 2007, the play was taken to the Season Selection Committee, comprising about 8 members. They read tons of plays and decided which plays they wanted to include in the next season at BYU. Joel's play was selected and approved to be performed in the Pardoe Theater for Fall 2008.

Joel continued to make revisions on the play, sending revised drafts to Eric Samuelsen, the director. Auditions were held, a cast was selected, and a script was given to the actors. The script went through further revisions as Joel incorporated actors' suggestions.

Fun fact: Joel can continue to make changes to the script until 7:15pm on closing night. Only then will the script be in its final form.

Where will the play go from here? Joel will send it out to potential theatrical companies who will hopefully want to perform it for their audiences. Joel said, "If nothing else I hope to take it back to my small home town community theatre and say "Hey, remember me? I wrote a play. Want to put it on stage?"

Interview with playwright, Joel Bree by Laura Tolsma, Dramaturg



Laura: What was your inspiration for writing this play? Did you have any experience similar to this?

Joel: "I wanted to write something fun; a comedy. I've found that it comes fairly easily to me. My original idea involved a newlywed couple on a trip to Hawaii with the groom's family and there was some hokey idea about trying to switch a fake diamond ring with a real one. With each rewrite I tried to escalate the situation more and more. I didn't have an experience exactly like this one but a lot of this play comes out of the feeling of joining an entirely new family when you get married. I was a little overwhelmed at first by my wife's family, and I think she felt the same about mine."

Laura: Do any of the characters resemble real members in your family?

Joel: "All of the characters in this play have some resemblance to someone I know. Mostly I took interesting quirks that I found in people I know and developed those ideas into more complex characters. For example, I have a cousin named Brandon who

is one of the funniest people I know. My wife really does have an uncle with a brilliant mind who can tell you five or six people who all share your birthday. My best friend's parents were the inspiration for Dad and Jeanie because he's a dentist who does free work for his family on vacations and she always has a camera in hand."

Laura: Any weird quirks that you relate to in these characters?

Joel: "I don't think that I have any specific quirks that these characters have, but I like to think that there's a little part of me in each of them. That's pretty cheesy, huh?"

Laura: Is there a certain message we should take from this play?

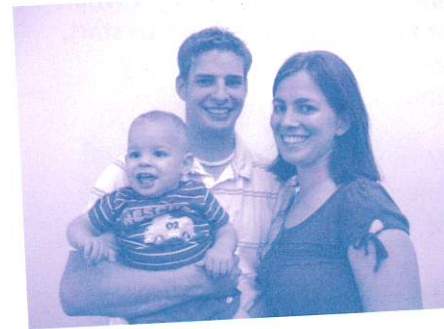
Joel: "I wouldn't say that there's a specific message I want people to take away from this show. However, if people see my show and then start looking at their own families in a different light, I guess I've accomplished something."

Fun fact: The play was originally set in a hotel. It was switched to a houseboat for more comedic effect.

Ask Yourself... How does location affect a play?

Interview with playwright, cont.

Fun fact: The family song that Grandma sings in the second half is an actual song from the playwright's wife's family.



Laura: When did you decide to become a playwright?

Joel: "When I was in eighth grade I took one of those "what-career-you-would-be-best-suited-for"-type tests. It told me to be a playwright. I thought that was bizarre and didn't think of it again until I got to college and decided to take a playwriting class as an elective. I fell in love with writing."

Laura: How does it feel to see your play being performed?

Joel: "It is so weird to me that something I wrote actually makes people laugh. Part of me still doesn't believe it. The very best part of this whole process

for me is to get different takes on the characters and on every aspect of the play really. When I saw an early set design I was blown away by how incredible it looked. And it wasn't anything like I had envisioned. The very first read through with this cast was an amazing experience because they're all so talented and give life to my characters in ways that I hadn't even thought of before. It's a really incredible experience."

Laura: What advice do you have for future playwrights?

Joel: "Don't be afraid to let the characters take you in a different direction than what you expected. In the beginning I had an idea and I tried to write that one idea. When I opened myself up to different ideas and possibilities, the play really started to flourish."



Interview with Actors

"You were cast in these roles because of your ability to take eccentric characters seriously."

—Eric Samuelsen, Director on the first night of rehearsal

I met with the actors at rehearsal and asked them a few questions:

Is there anything about your character that you can relate to?

"I love playing blackjack!" —Leslie Hiatt, Linsey

"I enjoy getting what I want, and will go to extremes to achieve my objectives." —Brock Kannan, Ted

Do you have any obsessions that people might say you are "eccentric" about?

"I own a ridiculously large amount of DVD's (116) and I own about 150 musicals (cast albums)."

— Peter Layland, Brandon

"I can't have black socks and white socks mixed in the same drawer, they need their own side. All silverware needs to go head down in a dishwasher." —Arisael Rivera, Ron

"When washing my hands in public restrooms I shake the water off my hands in every sink before I dry them off." —Emily Foster, Sharon

Share a funny story about your family.

"At Disneyland, my family decided to commandeer a bench for the whole day in order to get the best view of the fireworks. It rained all day but we were faithful to the plan in our ponchos and umbrellas. We would take turns riding rides and sitting at the bench. Unfortunately, right when the fireworks were about to start, they were cancelled!!" —Cory Minor, James

"We race lawn mowers on Christmas day." —Brock Kannan, Ted

What do you think is the theme of the play?

"Families who go on houseboats together, stay together. Or, Quirky is genetic." —Merrill Matheson, Dad

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REPORTING ARTS AND CULTURE

THE DAILY UNIVERSE

The Voice of the Brigham Young University Community

Production Staff

Chelsea Abinante

Assistant Stage Manager

From San Diego, California. A senior in theatre arts studies. Recent credits include Marie in *Drums in The Night* and Goneril in *King Lear* at BYU, Rosalind in *As You Like It*, and Mistress Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at North Coast Repertory Theatre.

Joel Bree

Playwright

From Crescent City, California. Graduated from BYU in theatre arts. This is Joel's first work to be produced and is a product of BYU playwriting classes, faculty support, and many crazy family experiences.

Kate Cannon

Properties designer

From Wichita, Kansas. Junior in industrial design. This is Kate's first production.

Emily Jacobson

Assistant Makeup Designer

From Seattle, Washington. Junior majoring in theatre arts studies. Recent credits include makeup supervisor for *Roofsliding* and "the talkative roommate" in home movie *The Onion*.

Anna Kron

Lighting Designer

From Dublin, Ohio. Senior in theatre arts studies with an emphasis in lighting design with a communications minor. Recent credits include lighting designer for *The Seagull*, assistant stage manager for *Hamlet* and assistant lighting designer for *The Foreigner*. Her design for *The Seagull* won an award at the ACTF competition.

Summer Lewis

Stage Manager

From Pahrump, Nevada. Graduated from BYU in theatre education. Recent credits include American Woman in *Esperanza Rising* and costume designer for *The Seagull* at BYU.

Dick Merkling

Assistant Scenic Designer

From Orem, UT. Senior in theatre studies emphasizing in design. Recent credits include assistant scenic designer for *Dial "M" for Murder*, scenic designer for *UP WITH KIDS!*, director for *December Roses*, *Codgers in the Night*, and *The Good Life* (New Play Project), and director for *UP WITH KIDS!* Spanish Fork area.

Adisti Regar

Scenic Designer

From Jakarta, Indonesia. Senior majoring in media arts studies and humanities with a minor in design. Recent credits include art director on capstone film projects *Best Wishes!*, *Love, Adele and Dirt*, assistant scenic designer for *BERLIN* at BYU, and assistant art director for *Goodbye, Mr. Pink* at the NFTS in London.

Haleh Risdana

Costume & Makeup Designer

From Laguna Beach, California. A second-year MFA student. Graduated from Cal State—Long Beach with a BA in fine arts. Haleh recently completed the Makeup FX program at The Makeup Designory in Burbank, CA. Works include *The Pageant of the Masters*, Disney, Royal Caribbean, Bravo T.V., Orange County Performing Arts, and Civic Light Opera.

Orly Ruiz

Assistant Costume Designer

From Chihuahua, Mexico. Senior in theatre arts studies with an emphasis in costume design and a minor in communications. Recent credits include assistant costume designer for *The Gondoliers* and costume design for *Apologies*.

Maria Schulte

Assistant Costume Designer

From Jefferson City, Missouri. Student in theatre arts studies.

Christina Tibbetts

Sound Designer

From Mesa, Arizona. Senior in theatre arts studies with an emphasis in design and technology and a minor in English. Recent credits include assistant sound designer for *Stuck on the Edge*, sound designer for *The Seagull*, drama teacher/director at Montessori International School, and sound designer for *Roofsliding*.

Laura Tolsma

Dramaturg

From Batavia, Illinois. Graduated in theatre studies, emphasis in dramaturgy. Recent credits include dramaturg for *BERLIN*, a new musical production from BYU in connection with BYU Broadcasting, and dramaturg for *Big River* at Tuachan. She is a member of the Literary Managers & Dramaturgs of the Americas.

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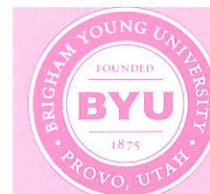
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Justine Trotter
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Andrew Veenstra

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