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DEPARTMENT of DRAMA

PRESENTS



ANGELS IN AMERICA

PART I: MILLENNIUM APPROACHES

BY TONY KUSHNER

Gavin Cameron-Webb

Director

January 25, 26, 30, 31, February 1 & 2, 2014

Robert Cohen Theatre

Claire Trevor School of the Arts

University of California, Irvine

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ANGELS IN AMERICA

By **Tony Kushner**

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Director

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January 25, 26, 30, 31, February 1 & 2, 2014

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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

"I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just; that his justice cannot sleep forever."

– Thomas Jefferson

Marilyn comes out of the glass doors to St. Vincent's and tells me Clyde has AIDS. We have a bowl of soup at a nearby restaurant; we don't say much to each other. We know what this means; it is the fall of 1985.

The summer before, I was talking to Don on the Second Avenue sidewalk while he waited for the Hampton Jitney. He tells me to call him next week. But he's dead next week. Inexplicably, more friends just die: Bill, Felix, Stuart, John, Peter...

Some ten years before Ford had told the city to drop dead; and now it seems like we are. Down in DC, President Reagan says it's 'Morning in America' and speaks about 'A shining city on the hill'. But we know he's not talking about us.

I stand on the subway platform and try to make sense of this. I feel that my friends have not really died, they've just disappeared. What the f**k is going on? I try to puzzle this out while listening to the roar of the downtown express and reading the screaming screeds plastered to the walls. Can this plague really be a CIA plot?

Later Clyde's village apartment fills up with strangers. They take Clyde out for a meal but he is too weak to get out of the car.

I leave town. Another show. I hear Marilyn's distant voice on the telephone telling the grim news of Clyde's inexorable decline. And then somewhere in Indiana, he's dead.

A year or two later I have breakfast with my best friend from college. He tells me he's HIV Positive. He scratches his head and tells me not to worry. I really miss him.

The troubling thing is that this is all true, but not at all unusual.

We are still living in the shadow of this great and terrible play. But now the Angel has come and gone - we've had Glasnost and we've seen Perestroika. The twin towers have fallen and the markets have collapsed. Gay marriage is legal but the planet is heating up. The ozone layer is collapsing. Are Harper's nightmares coming true? And what comes after the Plague? Revolution?

– **Gavin Cameron-Webb**
Director

DRAMATURG NOTES

Brief Production History

Angels in America Part I: Millennium Approaches was commissioned in 1990, workshopped in Los Angeles at the Mark Taper Forum, and given its official premiere in San Francisco by the Eureka Theatre Company in 1991. The play next appeared in London in 1992 at the Royal National Theatre to critical acclaim, followed by Part 2: *Perestroika* the following year. Both plays were produced together for the first time in 1992 in Los Angeles. *Millennium Approaches* received its Broadway premiere the following season, opening at the Walter Kerr Theatre on May 4, 1993, directed by George C. Wolfe. The Broadway production ran for 367 performances. Tony Kushner developed both parts into a successful HBO miniseries in 2003. *Millennium Approaches* was revived by the Signature Theatre Company in 2010. The play has also been produced by countless universities, high schools, and regional theatres across the United States. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the play's Broadway premiere.

Notes about the Play

In many ways, Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* saga is a series of encounters with history. The vast amount of historical references in the scripts allude to many figures born before the twentieth century, while many other figures mentioned are still alive today. Those familiar with Kushner's works will already be acquainted with his keen historical insight. To those new to his writing, what I wish to point to in *Millennium Approaches* is the manner in which Kushner invokes the particular moment of the mid-1980s to both look at that moment itself and to emphasize how the past has shaped the present, while asking what this may mean for the future. Kushner avoids the didactic tone of a history lesson by weaving historical realities into the rich lives of his characters, revealing how history originates in the daily choices of ordinary individuals. It is this consideration that gives *Angels in America* currency for audiences twenty years after its premiere, inviting us to consider not only what has changed and what has remained the same in the intervening years, but also to consider what role we ourselves have played in our nation's drama.

Angels in America Part I: Millennium Approaches takes place in New York City over several months, from the last weeks of October 1985 to the first weeks of January 1986, around the time of Ronald Reagan's second inauguration. In the New York City of the mid-1980s, the twin towers still formed a recognizable part of the skyline and Times Square had yet to receive the massive infusion of capital that would make it the prime tourist destination it is today. Front-page headlines of *The New York Times* alternated between the spread of Communism in Soviet-allied countries, the Reagan administration's activities at home and abroad, and the wide range of issues surrounding the growing AIDS crisis (at the time not yet formally acknowledged by Reagan). The disparity existing between the rich and the poor was as alarming as it is now, defense spending sent the federal budget into the largest deficit in American history, and tax rates for the wealthiest Americans were at an historical low. What Ronald Reagan heralded as a new era of freedom and prosperity was, for many, a time of struggle and despair.

While all of the political exigencies of the 1980s influence the play, the AIDS crisis of the 1980s is an important historical touchstone for *Millennium Approaches*. Not only is AIDS a medical reality for two of the play's main characters, but it functions symbolically in the play in the same way it did in reality, representing a major issue of

the time over which conservative and liberal ideologies violently collided. There are few social issues of this period which demonstrate the fanatical bigotry of the right and the extreme compassion (and its limits) of the left as did the politics behind the AIDS pandemic. While conservative religious and political leaders were denouncing AIDS as a justifiable punishment for homosexuals and drug abusers, grass roots movements in San Francisco and New York were creating health care and hospice support networks for AIDS patients. When the ultra-conservative Reagan administration reduced funding for AIDS research despite rising death tolls, individual efforts by non-profit organizations to raise money for research increased dramatically. The reactions to the AIDS crisis, like the anti-nuke demonstrations of 1983 and the demonstrations against the economic crisis in 1981, revealed a society deeply divided in its political and moral foundations. To a large degree, *Millennium Approaches* is an investigation of how large-scale national tensions play out in the minutiae of people's everyday lives, humanizing polemics in a way newspapers and other media rarely achieve. The characters' struggles with AIDS in this play test the limits of both prejudice and hope.

Aside from providing a social and historical context for the play, the AIDS crisis serves as a sort of prism to refract the play's various perspectives on the theme of justice. It seems that each character's attitude towards (or ignorance of) the true human cost of AIDS defines their attitude towards justice. Justice first appears in a literal form, represented by the Hall of Justice. Here "justice" is ostensibly connected with the fair and impartial implementation of the law. We quickly learn, however, that the personal discriminatory attitudes of those with political clout corrupt legislative justice beyond recognition. By considering justice in this way, Kushner illustrates the risk hysteria poses to the ideals of justice posed in the Constitution. To play on the final words of "The Pledge of Allegiance" one might ask, liberty and justice, for whom? On a more abstract level, ideas of personal justice permeate much of the play, connected more to love than to the law. How characters treat one another, where love falls short or overflows, what words are said and why lies are told all connect back to questions of fairness, equity, kindness, and devotion. As Belize says in Act 3, "Justice is simple. Democracy is simple. Those things are unambivalent. But love is very hard. And it goes bad for you if you violate the hard law of love." Characters suffer the most in this play for crimes of the heart, not violations of the law.

To encompass the epic landscape of *Millennium Approaches*, Kushner employs a full palette of theatrical techniques. The rapidly changing locations demand a highly versatile yet minimalist set, while the moments of what Kushner calls "magic" require sumptuous moments of true illusion. Many critics of this play invoke the name of German political theatre director Bertolt Brecht when describing Kushner's work, drawing a parallel between Brecht's distancing techniques and the episodic and often split-scene structure of *Millennium Approaches*. According to Brecht, "When something seems 'the most obvious thing in the world' it means any attempt to understand the world has been given up."¹ This means that a play, if it is to teach its spectator anything, must point at the things one "knows" and ask her to consider them anew. Kushner achieves this by oscillating between keeping the theatrical apparatus in view and encapsulating the spectator entirely in brief but luscious moments of magic. In this way, he avoids the pitfall of Realism, which tends to present events as fixed rather than changeable. The realistic acting style set in abruptly short episodes, the fascinating improbability of strangers

appearing in each other's dreams, and the frank seriousness of ghostly apparitions who can dial a rotary phone are all techniques Kushner uses to draw the audience in while simultaneously creating room for critical distance.

Called "the most thrilling American play in years" by the reviewer of the Broadway premiere², *Angels in America Part I: Millennium Approaches* is a theatrical megalith, veering wildly between the personal and political, the historical and the fictional, the epic and the intimate, the real and the hyper-real. In this play, history and imagination collide to produce a cultural artifact best described by the subtitle to the work, "a gay fantasia on national themes." What makes this play so memorable is that, even at its most fantastic, Kushner's work points not only to the reality of the play's political moment, but to the events preceding it and to what might happen after, implicating us all in the ongoing narrative project that is the history of the United States of America.

– **Katie Turner, M.A.**, 3rd Year PhD Student
Dramaturg

Historical Figures in the Play



Roy Cohn (1927-1986) While many playwrights take liberties when representing historical figures, Kushner's portrayal of Roy Cohn suffers very little exaggeration. The swaggering, power-hungry lawyer of the play mirrors his real-life counterpart. Cohn first came to prominence for his role in the trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in 1951. His prosecution of the Rosenbergs and his role in the Communist "witch hunt" contributed to the hysteria surrounding the Cold War. He gained

further notoriety for his activities in his position as counsel to Joseph McCarthy's Government Operations Committee. In this post, Cohn investigated U. S. State Department libraries in Europe, naming books by authors such as Langston Hughes and Dashiell Hammett as Communist propaganda. Cohn resigned from this post after his efforts to manipulate a subcommittee to gain preferential treatment for a colleague were exposed. Following this Cohn returned to New York to open a private practice. In New York, Cohn cultivated a large network of political connections, including many judges, and had extensive ties with the media as well. These connections conferred on him a high political profile and added to the aura of his public persona. Cohn was also involved in several lawsuits, with the accusations against him ranging from bribery and tampering with juries to suits from vendors for not paying his bills. Cohn was disbarred in 1986 for unethical behavior. Cohn died that same year of complications due to AIDS, which he insisted was liver cancer. The revelation of Cohn's homosexuality after his death was a great shock to many, as Cohn, like many other conservative anti-Communists, decried homosexuality as immoral, emasculating, and unpatriotic.



Ethel Rosenberg (1915-1953) and Julius Rosenberg

(1918-1953) In many ways, the story of Ethel Rosenberg and her husband Julius epitomizes the climate of the McCarthy era in the United States. Although Ethel is the only one to appear in the play, her fate cannot be separated from that of her husband. Ethel and Julius were both born and raised in New York City in a low-income Jewish neighborhood. They met in 1936 and were married in 1939. In college, Julius studied engineering and earned high academic honors. Ethel worked in clerical jobs until her children were born. In 1940, Julius was hired as an engineer for the Army Signal Corps, but was fired

abruptly in 1945. The grounds for his termination were that he was a member of the Communist party, which he denied to no avail. Five years later, former co-worker David Greenglass and his wife implicated the Rosenbergs in an espionage case, naming them as co-conspirators in the passing of sensitive nuclear research findings to the Soviet Union. The Rosenbergs were convicted of treason and sentenced to execution. Numerous public demonstrations were given against the ruling. While these demonstrations had little effect, they represent the largest public resistance to the political hysteria of the Cold War. The Rosenbergs' sentences were carried out on June 19, 1953 in New York's Sing Sing prison. To this date, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are the only civilians to be executed for espionage in the history of the United States. Efforts from the Rosenbergs' sons and other supporters have produced a great deal of evidence showing their trial and conviction to be based on fabricated evidence, while other documents have surfaced ostensibly reinforcing their guilt. The question of not only the guilt or innocence of the Rosenbergs but the legality of their prosecution remain unanswered today. Just as Ethel haunts Roy in *Millennium Approaches*, the Rosenberg trial continues to haunt American political history.

¹ Brecht, Bertolt. "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction." In *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Ed. and Trans. John Willett.

² Rich, Frank. "Angels in America; Millennium Approaches; Embracing all Possibilities in art and Life." *Rev. of Angels in America Part I: Millennium Approaches*, by Tony Kushner, dir George C. Wolfe. Walter Kerr Theatre, New York. *New York Times* 5 May 1993, late ed.: C15. *ProQuest NewsPapers*. Web. 13 Oct 2013.

CAST

(In Order of Appearance)

Rabbi/Eskimo	Ryan Brodsky
Roy Cohn	Jacob Dresch
Joe Pitt	Adam Schroeder
Harper Pitt	Bri McWhorter
Belize/Mr. Lies	Anthony Simone
Louis Ironson	Josh Odsess-Rubin*
Prior Walter	Matt Koenig
Angel/Emily	Hayley Palmer
Henry/Man/Prior 1	Connor Bond
Martin Heller/Prior 2	Alex White
Hannah Pitt	Bree Murphy
Ethel Rosenberg/Bronx Woman	Samantha Aneson

**Appearing courtesy of Actors' Equity*

New York City Fall/Winter 1985

Act I

10-Minute Intermission

Act 2

10-Minute Intermission

Act 3

*Hair designs donated by
Robert Helgeson
Salon Ecco*

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Vice Chair, Associate Producer	Don Hill
Scenic Design Mentor	Michael Ganio
Costume Design Mentor	Shigeru Yaji
Lighting Design Mentor	Lonnie Alcaraz
Sound Design Mentor	Mike Hooker
Stage Manager Mentor	Don Hill
Assistant Stage Managers	Ian Daelucian, Amber Julian
Production Assistants	Cesar Arias, Ashley Martin, Bryan Perez, Shannon Funderburk, Maria Oliveira
Scenic Charge Artist	Andy Broomell
Scenic Design Assistants	Morgan Price, Luis Mondragon
Costume Design Assistant	Sera Bourgeau
Lighting Design Assistant	Brady King
Sound Design Assistant	Kelsi Halverson
Master Electrician	Martha Carter

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Costume Shop Manager	Julie Keen
Sr. Wardrobe Technicians	Erik Lawrence, Yen Trang Le
Lighting Supervisor	Ron Cargile
Sound Supervisor	B.C. Keller
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Audio Crew	Costume Crew	Electrics Hang Crew	
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Tariq Malik	Marilyn Yuan	Andrew Mondello	Lucile Dillon
Scenic Crew	Cara Call	Jessica Sanmarti	Mata Jean Barr
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- Oct. 3 – Nov. 27* The Symbolic Landscape: Pictures
Beyond Picturesque
- Oct. 3 – Nov. 27* A Twice Lived Fragment of Time
- Oct. 3 – Jan. 25* Sight & Sound
- Oct. 8* Lecture / Motherwell's Mother:
An Iconography in Abstraction
- Oct. 9* Lecture /The Ineffable, the Unspeakable,
and the Inspirational: A Grammar
- Oct. 10-12 Far-Flung follows function
- Oct. 15* Lecture / The Nature Theatre:
Art and Politics
- Oct. 16* Lecture / Desire Lines in the Mind
- Oct. 17* Gassmann Electronic Music Series /Juicy
- Oct. 19 Malcolm Bilson and Cecilia Sun in Concert
- Oct. 21*, 28* Asian Horror Film Festival
- Oct. 25-27* Dance Conversations II: Theatres in Dance

NOVEMBER

- Nov. 2* Beall Center Family Day
- Nov. 2 Alan Terricciano and André Gribou
in Concert
- Nov. 7* CTSA Campus Open House
- Nov. 9 UCI Symphony Orchestra Concert
- Nov. 9, 10, 14-17 Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson
- Nov. 13* Noon Showcase Concert
- Nov. 19* Wind Ensemble Concert
- Nov. 20* UCI Small Groups Concert
- Nov. 22, 23 Mandoria Awakening: 2
- Nov. 23-26, 30,
Dec. 1 A Christmas Carol

DECEMBER

- Dec. 4* UCI Guitar Ensemble Noon Concert
- Dec. 4 Trio Céleste Concert
- Dec. 5-7 New Slate
- Dec. 6* Art Song and Artistry Series / Wagner at 200

JANUARY 2014

- Jan. 9 – Feb. 8* Critical Curatorial Series
- Jan. 9 – Mar. 15* A Solo Exhibition by Yoshua Okón
- Jan. 9 – Mar. 15* A Solo Exhibition of Work by Victoria Fu
- Jan. 15* Gassmann Electronic Music Series /
Synthesizers Live!
- Jan. 25, 26, 30, 31,
Feb. 1, 2 Angels In America

FEBRUARY

- Feb. 6 – May 1* Wall of Sound: New Work by Zimoun
- Feb. 7, 8 Kei Akagi & Friends in Concert
- Feb. 12-16 Dance Visions 2014
- Feb. 14 20th Annual Valentine's Day Celebration
- Feb. 19* Noon Showcase Concert
- Feb. 21* Art Song and Artistry Series / ABCs of Song

- Feb. 21 – Mar. 16* Second Year MFA Review
- Feb. 25* Wind Ensemble Concert
- Feb. 26* UCI Small Groups Concert

MARCH

- Mar. 1 UCI Symphony Orchestra Concert
- Mar. 8* Bernard Gilmore Memorial Concert
- Mar. 8, 9, 11-16 The Trial Of Dedan Kimathi
- Mar. 9 UCI Choir Concert
- Mar. 10 Claire Trevor Star Celebration
Honoring Joan and Don Beall
- Mar. 13* Drama, Law and Justice: The Making
of The Trial of Dedan Kimathi
- Mar. 15 Mari Akagi & Kei Akagi in Concert

APRIL

- Apr. 3-19* Tenth Annual Guest Juried
Undergraduate Exhibition
- Apr. 3-19* Undergraduate Honors Project
- Apr. 4* Spatia
- Apr. 9* Bach's Lunch
- Apr. 12 Hossein Oumoumi in Concert
- Apr. 17-19 Dance Escape
- Apr. 19* Beall Center Family Day
- Apr. 22-25* Virtual Venues: The Distributed Body
- Apr. 24 – May 2* MFA Thesis Exhibition, Part I
Gassmann Electronic Music
Series /Interactive Instrumentation
- Apr. 26 , 27, 29,
30, May 1-4 As You Like It
- Apr. 30* UCI Guitar Ensemble Noon Concert

MAY

- May 1-3 Physical Graffiti
- May 3 Lorna Griffitt & Friends in Concert
- May 8-16* MFA Thesis Exhibition, Part II
- May 14* Noon Showcase Concert
- May 14* Gassmann Electronic Music
Series / ICIT Concert
- May 18 Annual Honors Music Concert
- May 20* Wind Ensemble Concert
- May 21* UCI Small Groups Concert
- May 22-30* MFA Thesis Exhibition, Part III
- May 23* Art Song and Artistry Series /
A Celebration of Women in Music
- May 24 Sing of Spring
- May 31, Jun. 1, 3-7 Nickel Mines

JUNE

- Jun. 2 Happy Days
- Jun. 2 Trio Céleste Concert
- Jun. 6 UCI Symphony Orchestra Concert

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We invite you to try one of our favorite local eateries before your next performance, and enjoy a special treat that same day "on the house."

Simply display your ticket to a Claire Trevor School of the Arts Dance, Drama or Music performance to your server at one of our participating restaurant partners, and let them show their appreciation for your patronage.



19100 Von Karman Ave., Irvine 92612 (949) 752-5999

Enjoy fine dining and live entertainment at Bistango, and receive a complimentary specialty dessert.



KOBA TOFU GRILL

4501 Campus Dr., Irvine 92612 (949) 725-0516

Choose the delicacies offered at family-friendly Koba Tofu Grill, and enjoy a complimentary dumpling appetizer.

Save your receipt from either of these delicious locations, and present it along with your ticket stub that evening to receive a complimentary coffee at our very own Cyber A Café .





Community Services

Find Your Passion at Any Age



The City of Irvine offers a year-round program of recreational, educational and leisure-time activities for all age groups and interest levels. Programs include a variety of classes, athletic leagues, special events and camps. For a complete listing of programs, visit irvinequickreg.org. Additionally, the City of Irvine has a facility dedicated to fine arts. Visit irvinefinearts.org for a listing of programs, studios, events and exhibitions.

irvinequickreg.org

949-724-6610



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