

angels in america

# MILLENNIUM APPROACHES



a senior thesis in directing for  
claire donnellan and acting  
for jordi bertrán ramírez

# SILENCE=DEATH

feb 28-mar 2, 2024

# **ANGELS IN AMERICA PART I: MILLENNIUM APPROACHES AUDITION PACKET**

By Tony Kushner

February 28 - March 2, 2023

Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies Blackbox

## **Who?**

A Senior Thesis in Directing for Claire Donnellan and in Acting for Jordi Bertrán Ramírez  
Producer: Clementine Rice  
Stage Manager: Arden Parrish  
Faculty Advisers: David Chambers and Mike Rossmly  
Preferred Contact Email: [claire.donnellan@yale.edu](mailto:claire.donnellan@yale.edu) and [jordi.bertran@yale.edu](mailto:jordi.bertran@yale.edu)

## **What?**

America in the mid-1980's. In the midst of the AIDS crisis and a conservative Reagan administration, six New Yorkers with interconnected lives grapple with life and death, love and sex, heaven and hell.

## **When?**

Rehearsals begin 9/13, Tech: 2/11-2/27, Performances: 2/28-3/2

## **Time Commitment**

Around 3-5 hours per week in the fall semester, around 10-12 hours per week in the spring, 4-6 hours per day during tech rehearsals, *may vary depending on role*

## **Content Warnings**

Moments of violence and intimacy depicted onstage (see character list), and discussions of death, addiction, racism, antisemitism, and homophobia

## **Audition Expectations**

Prepare one of the sides from the options below

## **Audition Location**

220 York St (room TBD, will email specific location prior to auditions)

Thank you so much for your interest in auditioning for *Millennium Approaches*. This packet has information about the play, the production process, and what to expect at auditions and callbacks. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Claire Donnellan ([claire.donnellan@yale.edu](mailto:claire.donnellan@yale.edu), director) or Jordi Bertrán Ramírez ([jordi.bertran@yale.edu](mailto:jordi.bertran@yale.edu), playing Prior Walter). If you're interested in working on *Millennium Approaches* in a technical capacity, please reach out to our producer, Clementine Rice ([clementine.rice@yale.edu](mailto:clementine.rice@yale.edu)). We're looking forward to seeing you in auditions!

## ABOUT THE PLAY:

New York City. 1985.

Prior Walter is dying. His boyfriend Louis has abandoned him and he's having visions of an angel. His best friend Belize doesn't believe him. Joe Pitt, a Mormon law clerk, struggles to repress his homosexuality, while his wife, Harper, obsessively self-medicates with Valium. A conservative, Reaganite political climate looms over the country, embodied by the vicious and dying behemoth of a lawyer, Roy Cohn. And somewhere, Joe's mother Hannah is disappointed.

Premiering in 1991, *Millennium Approaches* is the first half of Tony Kushner's *Angels in America*, a landmark piece about American culture and the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, running about 3.5 hours and leaving an audience with questions about democracy, faith, and the future of our country.

## PRODUCTION PROCESS AND EXPECTATIONS:

*Millennium Approaches* is a senior project for two Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies majors and therefore will have a more involved production process than a typical Creative and Performing Arts Grant project. Claire's directing thesis explores the Analysis through Action method, developed by Konstantin Stanislavsky and Maria Knebel. This method takes a different approach to the rehearsal process than traditional productions, so ***we are looking for actors who are open-minded and willing to take creative risks.*** Improvisational analysis (done through études, or scene studies) is at the core of Analysis through Action, as is deep dramaturgical engagement with the play. To that end, we will have dramaturgy sessions every week in the fall semester led by Jordi and our dramaturg, Carson White, helping the actors and designers build an understanding of the world of the play, in addition to blocks of ensemble rehearsal.

In the fall, we will explore the play scene by scene, and in the spring, we will set blocking. Actors will not be asked to be memorized until after winter break. A tentative rehearsal schedule can be found [here](#).

Alongside our dramaturgy sessions, ***actors will be asked to do some individual engagement with the text outside of rehearsal***—both Claire and Jordi's research relies heavily on an informed and engaged ensemble, wanting to explore beyond the surface level of the play. Actors should expect to spend an hour or two every week working on the production outside of rehearsal.

## ESTIMATED TIME COMMITMENT:

**September 13, 2023 - December 15, 2023:** 3-5 hours per week

- 1 two-hour ensemble rehearsal every week, exploring the play scene by scene using études (improvisational scene studies)
- 1 two-hour dramaturgy session every week, covering history and culture relevant to the play
- Potential small group or individual rehearsal (not more than an extra hour every week)

**January 16, 2024 - February 10, 2024:** 10-12 hours per week

- Staging the play - based on the work done in the fall, more traditional blocking rehearsals

**February 11, 2024 - February 27, 2024:** 4-6 hours per day (with a few break days!)

- Working in the theater and incorporating technical elements (sound, light, set, etc.)

**February 28 - March 2, 2024:** Show dates!

If you have questions about the rehearsal process, time commitment, or expectations, please reach out to Claire ([claire.donnellan@yale.edu](mailto:claire.donnellan@yale.edu)). Interested in getting involved on the production side rather than acting? Email Clementine ([clementine.rice@yale.edu](mailto:clementine.rice@yale.edu)) for details on available positions.

## AUDITION PROCESS:

Auditions will be held from August 28 - September 2 in the Chapter Room in 220 York St (once you enter the building make a right and go up the stairs. At the second floor walk straight ahead and ascend the smaller set of stairs up to the next landing, then navigate to the last door at the end of the hall).

Sign up for a time slot on our [Yale College Arts page](#). If you are having trouble signing up for a time slot, please reach out to Clementine ([clementine.rice@yale.edu](mailto:clementine.rice@yale.edu)). **We encourage anyone who is interested in the project to audition, regardless of theater experience!**

For your audition, select one of these [sides](#). We will consider you for any roles you would like to play, not just the role you read for. You will read the side with Jordi (if it is a scene) or alone (if it is a monologue). You may be asked to reread the side after receiving some feedback. The side does not have to be memorized and we will have paper copies, but it is a good idea to familiarize yourself with the material prior to the audition. We will also ask you to do a short improvisation, related to the side you've just read. Reach out to Claire ([claire.donnellan@yale.edu](mailto:claire.donnellan@yale.edu)) with any questions.

Callbacks will be held on September 4th. Information will be sent out via email following the first round of auditions. We will contact you to let you know if you have been cast on September 10th.

## CHARACTERS:

Every actor in the ensemble (except the actor playing Louis) plays multiple roles:

- The actor playing Prior also plays a Man in the Park.
- The actor playing Harper also plays Martin Heller, a Reaganite Justice Department employee.
- The actor playing Belize also plays Mr. Lies, a travel agent imagined by Harper.
- The actor playing Joe also plays the ghost of a 13th century Prior Walter and an Antartican.
- The actor playing Roy also plays the ghost of a 17th century Prior Walter.
- The actor playing Hannah also plays an Orthodox rabbi, Roy's doctor, and Ethel Rosenberg.
- The actor playing the Angel also plays a nurse, a real-estate agent, and a homeless woman.

The character of Belize is Black and the character of Louis is white. All other characters do not have a specified race. We encourage actors of all genders to audition for the roles they feel most excited about playing. Certain roles involve moments of violence or intimacy. The staging of those moments will be choreographed and flexible, depending on the comfort of the actors involved. We've included the instances of violence and intimacy at the end of the packet. You can also read the entire [script](#) online for free through the Yale library. Please reach out with any questions or concerns.

## CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS:

**Roy M. Cohn**, a successful New York lawyer and unofficial power broker. Based on the real man, a notorious McCarthyist who died from AIDS. *[This role includes a short physical fight with Joe.]*

**Joseph Porter Pitt**, a chief clerk for Justice Theodore Wilson of the Federal Court of Appeals, Second Circuit. He is a Mormon struggling to repress his homosexuality who has been taken under Roy's wing. *[This role includes a short physical fight with Roy and kisses with Harper and Louis.]*

**Harper Amaty Pitt**, Joe's wife, an agoraphobic with a mild Valium addiction. *[This role includes a kiss with Joe.]*

**Louis Ironson**, a word processor working for the second Circuit Court of Appeals. *[This role includes a kiss with Joe and simulated sex with the actor playing Prior.]*

**Prior Walter**, Louis's boyfriend. Occasionally works as a club designer or caterer, otherwise lives very modestly but with great style off a small trust fund. Recently diagnosed with AIDS. *[This role has already been cast.]*

**Hannah Porter Pitt**, Joe's mother, residing in Salt Lake, living off her dead husband's army pension.

**Belize**, a registered nurse and former drag queen whose name was originally Norman Arriaga; Belize is a drag name that stuck.

**The Angel**, for divine emanations, Fluor, Phosphor, Lumen and Candle; manifest in One: the Continental Principality of America. She has magnificent steel-gray wings.

## **STAGE VIOLENCE:**

### **ACT 2. SCENE 4 - THE MAN IN THE PARK SLAPS LOUIS**

Louis: Give my best to Mom and Dad.

*(The Man slaps him.)*

### **ACT 3. SCENE 5 - ROY AND JOE FIGHT**

Roy: Shake?

*(Joe hesitates. He holds out his hand to Roy. Roy pulls Joe into a close, strong clench.)*

Roy: It's OK that you hurt me because I love you, baby Joe. That's why I'm so rough on you.

*(Roy releases Joe. Joe backs away a step or two.)*

Roy: Prodigal son. The world will wipe its dirty hands all over you.

Joe: It already has, Roy.

Roy: Now go.

*(Roy shoves Joe, hard. Joe turns to leave. Roy stops him, turns him around. He smooths the lapels on Joe's coat, tenderly.)*

Roy: I'll always be here, waiting for you...

*(Then with sudden violence, Roy grabs Joe's lapels and pulls him close, shaking him violently.)*

Roy: What did you want from me?! What was all this?! What do you want, treacherous ungrateful little-

*(Joe grabs Roy by the front of his robe, and propels him across the length of the room, slamming him against a bookcase. Joe holds Roy at arm's length, the other arm ready to hit.)*

Roy *(Laughing softly, daring Joe)*: Transgress a little, Joseph.

*(Joe releases Roy.)*

# SEXUAL CONTENT

## ACT I. SCENE 5 - JOE & HARPER KISS

JOE: Buddy kiss...

*(They kiss)*

## ACT 2. SCENE 4 - LOUIS & THE MAN IN THE PARK HAVE SEX

MAN: It's never too cold, let me warm you up. Please?

*(They begin to fuck.)*

MAN: Relax.

LOUIS: *(A small laugh)*: Not a chance.

MAN: It...

LOUIS: What?

MAN: I think it broke. The rubber. You want me to keep going? *(Little pause)* Pull out? Should I...

LOUIS: Keep going.

Infect me.

I don't care. I don't care.

*(Pause. The Man pulls out.)*

MAN: I . . . um, look, I'm sorry, but I think I want to go.

LOUIS: Yeah.

## ACT 3. SCENE 7 - JOE & LOUIS KISS

LOUIS: I don't not like that. I *hate* that.

JOE: So why on earth should we . . .

*(Louis goes to Joe and kisses him).*