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**Directed by Naima Warden
November 4-8, 2026**

ADELPHI
UNIVERSITY
College of Arts and Sciences

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MESSAGE FROM THE THEATRE DEPARTMENT

Theatre is more than one role—and so is our BFA.

We prepare versatile, imaginative theatre artists who can move confidently among acting, directing, design, writing, production, arts management, and collaboration. Students develop deep expertise in their chosen area while gaining a broad understanding of how theatre is created. You may enter as an actor, designer, or writer, but you'll graduate as a more complete theatre maker—ready to generate ideas, solve problems, lead projects, and contribute in many ways.

Through rigorous training, individualized attention, hands-on production opportunities, experimentation, and collaboration, students develop the craft, confidence, adaptability, and resilience needed for a changing profession. They learn to take creative risks, work generously as part of an ensemble, and develop a distinctive artistic voice.

Our BFA is grounded in a welcoming and inclusive artistic community where every voice matters. Students are encouraged to tell new stories, engage with diverse perspectives, and use theatre to connect with audiences and communities.

We don't simply prepare students for the theatre careers that exist today. We empower them to imagine—and create—the theatre that comes next.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' *The Comeuppance* changed my life. It brokered a conversation with my parents that I had not yet found the courage or the language to begin.

I remember leaving the theater knowing that my parents needed to see the play immediately. Soon afterward, we sat around the dinner table and spoke honestly about the inevitability of an ending. We made space to acknowledge how both of my parents, and especially my father, have watched so many beloved friends pass on. We wondered aloud where those friends might be now. But mostly, we remembered how much fun they had while they were here.

And perhaps that is the real conversation: not simply that we die, but that first, magnificently, ridiculously, painfully - we live.

Three years later, after seeing *Purpose*, I had the opportunity to tell Branden Jacobs-Jenkins how profoundly his writing had affected me and the students with whom I have shared his work. I choked back tears as I spoke. He listened. Truly, he listened, then embraced me with such kindness. Later... earlier in 2026, when I found myself passing him in the halls of the Park Avenue Armory, and then speaking with Maggie about which play I might direct, I felt something larger than coincidence at work. It felt like an invitation to offer a vision of *Everybody* concerned not merely with death, but with the audacious celebration of life.

The medieval morality play *Everyman*, which inspired *Everybody*, was written anonymously. Perhaps that is fitting. None of us knows exactly who will tell our story once we are gone, or which fragments of us will remain. A phrase. A gesture. A photograph. A kindness we thought no one noticed. A story that gets funnier every time somebody tells it. Our lives become a collection of scenes, breaths, ruptures, reunions, and tiny acts of consequence, the accumulated evidence that we were here.

This production invites you into that accumulation. You are not simply watching *Everybody's* journey; you are implicated in it. Death may enter for one person, but the summons reverberates through the entire room. We can bargain with it, joke with it, plead our case, change the subject, check our calendars, or suddenly remember an extremely important appointment elsewhere. We can even try to outrun it.

But Time will come.
And Time will stand still.

I do not know what the end will bring. I suspect the anonymous author of *Everyman* did not know either. What I do know is that I am deeply aware of my purpose in this body; with this mind, this spirit, and this breath. The ending intrigues me, certainly. But not living fully, messily, and without apology frightens me far more.

My greatest hope is that this experience awakens us to the exquisite urgency of being alive. That when our own moment comes, we are allowed to go gently. That we leave behind ripples of action, remnants of love, and some evidence of joy.

And, if we are very fortunate, perhaps somebody will sing... or dance; in honor of the life we dared to live. I hope.

Kindly,
Naima

PLAYWRIGHT'S BIO

Critically acclaimed playwright, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins is known to write political social commentaries about modern society. Often using abstract concepts and breaking the rules of traditional theatre, Jacobs-Jenkins gets the audience to rethink what they know and how they feel about the world around them. Featuring topics of race, gender, family, and while often utilizing a historic lens, Jacobs-Jenkins distorts realities to create a new message of diversity and change.

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins is a Brooklyn-based playwright and producer and two-time Pulitzer Prize finalist. He received the 2024 Tony Award for Best Revival of a Play for *APPROPRIATE*, which recently completed an acclaimed, record-breaking, 8-month run on Broadway.



Other recent theatre credits include *THE COMEUPPANCE* (Signature Theatre Company, NYC; Almeida Theatre, London); *GIRLS* (Yale Rep); *EVERYBODY* (Signature Theatre); *WAR* (Yale Rep; Lincoln Center/LCT3); *GLORIA* (Vineyard Theatre); *AN OCTOROON* (Obie Award; Soho Rep, Theatre for a New Audience); and *NEIGHBORS* (The Public Theater). He currently teaches at Yale University and serves as Vice President of the Dramatists Guild council and on the boards of Soho Rep, Park Avenue Armory, the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, and the Dramatists Guild Foundation. Additional honors include a USA Artists fellowship, a Guggenheim fellowship, the MacArthur fellowship, the Windham-Campbell Prize for Drama, and the inaugural Tennessee Williams Award.

Branden Jacob-Jenkins is a Residency Five playwright at Signature Theatre and under commissions from LCT3/Lincoln Center Theater, MTC/Sloan, and the Steppenwolf Theatre Company. His recent honors include the MacArthur Fellowship, the Windham-Campbell Prize for Drama, the Benjamin Danks Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation Theatre Award, the Steinberg Playwriting Award, and the Tennessee Williams Award.

A Letter from the Playwright

Dear Students,

Everybody is inspired by *Everyman*, a play written more than five hundred years ago in a world that was both unbelievably different and surprisingly similar to our own. At least officially, everyone in Europe subscribed to the same set of beliefs, those of the Catholic Church. Most people never left their hometowns or met anyone from another village, let alone another country or continent. At the same time, they were fascinated and troubled by many of the questions that continue to fascinate and trouble us today. What happens when we die? How should we prepare for our own death? What does it mean to live a good life?

When I began writing, I wanted to explore how a fifteenth century story like *Everyman* — which was itself influenced by an earlier Dutch play, which was itself influenced by an earlier Buddhist story—would resonate today. As *Everyman* tells Death in the original, “Thou comest when I had thee least in mind.” In today’s world, death can come for anyone, at any time. It can be anticipated, or it can be unexpected. It can happen in the street or in the hospital or in the home. As the Usher says in *Everybody*, “Think about that and what you want to do with the rest of your life, vis-à-vis that.” While death is an important part of this play, I hope you’ll find that it’s also, perhaps primarily, about how to live—both with yourself and other humans.

As you’ll see, this play may be different from others you’ve seen or heard about. Actors play not just other people, but also abstract concepts like “Beauty,” “Strength,” and a bunch of “Stuff.” The actors have all memorized the entire play, and at each performance they’ll randomly be assigned a part to play. This means that the show you see today will be very different from the one you would have seen if you’d come to the theatre yesterday, or tomorrow, or next week. Just as no two lives are ever lived the same, each performance of this play will be unique. Thank you for coming. I hope you enjoy the show.

Sincerely,
Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

Originally printed in Signature Theatre’s study guide for the show.

PLAY SYNOPSIS

Imagine that Death knocks on your door. You're scared - from everything you know, this is not a good thing - but there's a small part of you that is insatiably curious. Death tells you that God wants to see you. Seriously... you right now. Moreover, once you go to see God, you will not be able to come back home. Ever. No friends, no family, no internet, no tiktok, no phone - nothing. And, before you ask - no, you don't have a choice, and yes, this is really happening.

You have so many questions (why me? why now? what does this mean?) and Death is not here to give you all the answers. Naturally, you try to strike a deal to extend your lease on life. You plead with Death to let you bring along another person. Death agrees with a not-so-subtle eye roll - sure, yeah, of course, ask someone to come with you. Let's see what they'll say.

So, you go off to ask the biggest favor humanly possible: for someone to accompany you on your final journey. It shouldn't be too hard, right? You have great friends, a close family - they always donate to your GoFundMe campaigns... This is all going to work out.

What happens next? You probably have a guess, but to know for certain, you'll have to watch Everybody by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

EVERYBODY

A Person

SOMEBODIES (ALSO play A, B, C, & D)

Several People

USHER

An Usher

GOD

The voice of God

DEATH

The embodiment of Death

KINSHIP

Everybody's Close Family Member

COUSIN

Everybody's Cousin

BEAUTY

The embodiment of Beauty

MIND

The embodiment of the Mind

UNDERSTANDING

The embodiment of Understanding

FRIENDSHIP

The embodiment of Friendship

STRENGTH

The embodiment of Strength

STUFF

The embodiment of Stuff (personal possessions)

SENSES

The embodiment of the Five Senses

TIME

The embodiment of Time

LOVE

The embodiment of Love

GIRL

A young girl taken from the audience

ALL THE SHITTY EVIL THINGS

The embodiment of all the bad things you've done

GET INTO THE WORLD OF THE PLAY

This collection of books, movies, TV shows and music are inspired by the world of **Everybody**

Books

- Lincoln in the Bardo by George Saunders
- Mort, a Novel of Discworld by Terry Pratchett
- A Dirty Job by Christopher Moore

Movies

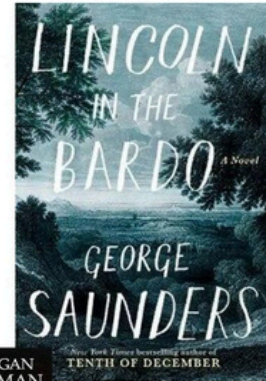
- Seven (1995)
- Thank You for Smoking (2005)
- Stranger than Fiction (2006)
- The Lobster (2015)

TV

- Dead Like Me (2003)
- Six Feet Under (2001)
- The Good Place (2016)

Music

- We the People...by A Tribe Called Quest (2016)
- Lemon by N.E.R.D., Rhianna and Pharrell Williams (2017)
- Over and Over by Hot Chip (2006)
- Applause by Lady Gaga (2013)



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does tone impact understanding? Are conversational tones easier to understand?
- What is the benefit of modernizing an existing play?
- Why do people avoid talking about death?
- How do people act differently when they know they will die soon?

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- **Everybody** is based on the 500-year-old play Everyman. Why do you think
- **Everyman** has remained relevant for over 500 years?
- What did you think of the characters who represented concepts? Is Death what you imagined death is like? What about Stuff? Love? Mind?
- Did you agree with each character's reaction to Everybody's request for companionship? Why or why not? If Everybody had asked you to join, what would you have said?



CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Embodiment (Writing & Discussion Exercise)

With students, make a list of abstract concepts

Examples: bravery, charity, confidence, determination, enthusiasm, hope, peace, sympathy, trust

Ask each student to choose one concept, imagine that concept as a person, then write a paragraph about the kind of person they are imagining

How do they behave at home or school? How do they interact with their friends?

What is their favorite song or television show? Why?

Discuss what the class came up with and their reasoning.

Did students who chose similar words create similar (or different) descriptions?

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

MORALITY

Particular principles or rules of conduct for behavior.

MORTALITY

The quality or state of being mortal, or subject to death.

PERSONIFICATION

An attribution of personal qualities to an abstract concept.

KINSHIP

The quality or state of being kin, or one's family.

ELEMENTS OF DRAMA

PLOT

The sequence of events in a play revealed through the action and/or dialogue.

THEME

The central topic the play investigates.

OBJECTIVE

The goal a character has within a play.

CONFLICT

The clash between opposing forces, ideas, or interests that creates tension.

STAGING

Patterns of movement in a play, including: entrances, exits, and movement on the stage.

TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

Elements such as sets, costumes, lights, music, props, and makeup used to create a unified and meaningful design for a theatrical production.

THEMES IN EVERYBODY

MORTALITY: No matter what - everyone dies.

SELF/LONELINESS: You enter and leave this world alone.

TIME / RELEVANCE: Time has not changed the fact we die; nor has it changed the fear we face.