

Queensland Theatre  
Company presents

# *Fat Pig*

by Neil LaBute

## Teachers' Notes

Prepared by Katie Stewart, Education Liaison Officer (Queensland Theatre Company)  
and Dramaturgical Research Secondment for *Fat Pig*, Kyle Walmsley, student from University of  
Southern Queensland

With thanks to the Queensland Theatre Company Marketing Department

The purpose of this document is to provide Queensland educators with information and resources for Queensland Theatre Company's production of *Fat Pig*. The activities and resources contained in this document are designed as the starting point for educators in developing more comprehensive lessons for this production. Katie Stewart is seconded to Queensland Theatre Company from Education Queensland as an Education Liaison Officer.



Queensland  
Government



Australian Government

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QueenslandTheatreCompany

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Produced by Queensland Theatre Company and Education Queensland.

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# ***Fat Pig***

**by Neil LaBute**

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## Synopsis — *Fat Pig*

When Tom meets Helen in a crowded restaurant, their chance encounter soon develops into a full-blown romance.

Helen is beautiful, smart, funny and just a little on the large size. But to Tom's self-obsessed work buddies, she's just plain gross.

As office gossip about their relationship turns increasingly malicious, peer pressure leads Tom to question whether his love for Helen outweighs the shallow stereotypes of his workmates.

## Cast

Paige Gardiner  
Amy Ingram  
Steven Rooke  
Christopher Sommers

Jeannie  
Helen  
Carter  
Tom

Morgan Dowsett  
Melanie Wild\*  
Renee Mulder  
Ben Hughes  
Tony Brumpton\*  
Ian Rendell  
Niki-J Witt

Director  
Assistant Director  
Designer  
Lighting Designer  
Sound Designer  
Projection and Motion Graphic Realisation  
Fight Director

Daniel Sinclair  
Christopher Horne  
Ashlee Hints  
Kyle Walmsley

Stage Manager  
Assistant Stage Manager  
Queensland University of Technology Stage Management Secondment  
University of Southern Queensland Dramaturgy Secondment

\*Tony Brumpton and Melanie Wild are part of Queensland Theatre Company's 2010 Emerging Artists Program, proudly sponsored by Brisbane Airport Corporation.

The World Premier of *Fat Pig* took place at the MCC Theatre on December 15, 2004. Artistic Directors: Robert LuPone & Bernard Telsey. Associate Artistic Director: William Cantler.

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## Curriculum Connections

### Fat Pig

by Neil LaBute  
31 May – 26 June

#### Themes and Ideas

- Peer pressure
- Living by others' standards
- Societal ideas of beauty
- Body image

#### Performance and Dramatic Elements

- Black comedy
- Contemporary western drama
- Short scene structure

Tom and Helen meet at a restaurant during their lunch break. Helen happens to be larger in size than the average person and the play questions expectations and values of western society: the right to judge, the pressure to 'appear' a certain way to others, who deserves to be loved and who does not.

R – 1 hour 51 minutes (no interval)

L – Frequent coarse language

V – Nil

S – Sexual overtones and references to sex

ELO – This black comedy challenges the narrative and characters of a typical 'romcom'. Its naturalistic conventions, short scenes and plot are suitable for, and will appeal to, Years 11 and 12 drama students and mature Year 10 students.

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## About the Playwright: Neil LaBute

Neil LaBute received his Master of Fine Arts degree in dramatic writing from New York University and was the recipient of a literary fellowship to study at the Royal Court Theatre, London and also attended the Sundance Institute's Playwrights Lab. Films include: *In the Company of Men* (New York Critics' Circle Award for Best First Feature, Filmmakers' Trophy at the Sundance Film Festival), *Your Friends and Neighbors*, *Nurse Betty*, *Possession*, and *The Shape of Things*, a film adaptation of his play by the same title.

Plays include: *bash: latter-day plays*, *The Shape of Things*, *The Mercy Seat*, *The Distance From Here*, *Autobahn*, a collection of five of his one-act plays; ***Fat Pig***, *Some Girls*, *This Is How It Goes*, *In a Dark Dark House* and *Reasons To Be Pretty* (Tony Nominated for Best Play). LaBute is also the author of several fictional pieces that have been published in *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Playboy* among others. *Seconds of Pleasure*, a collection of his short stories, was published by Grove Atlantic in October 2004.



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## Director's Insight — Morgan Dowsett

**Why do you think it's important to present plays that appeal to young people?**

Theatre should incite, provoke but ultimately make you think about yourself and your relation to the world, no matter what your age. It's an art form that has an uncanny ability to bring groups of people together, share in a collective experience and question the human condition. But we all experience different lessons at different times in our lives, so it's important to target those experiences to the right collective, be they young or more mature.



**Can you briefly discuss your vision or concept for the play?**

The play uses the perception of weight allegorically to address a bigger problem in our society: the one of peer pressure and victimisation. Whether we fall victim to bullies at high school or we buy the latest trends to feel acceptable with a social group, we keep being told what we should or shouldn't do with our lives. This is also very apparent with the power of the media. So we should ask ourselves, are we that suggestible? Should we really be governed by the views of others?

**Can you describe what Active Analysis is and how the process aids in rehearsing a play?**

Active Analysis is a rehearsal methodology developed by Stanislavski. It's used in the initial stages of rehearsals as a way to analyse the text and to help develop the world of the play and its characters. Its premise is very simple:

- Read a section of the play then discuss
- Improvise the section in silence then discuss the improvisation
- Re-read the same section and discuss the new discoveries
- Improvise the same section and discuss
- Repeat until an actor starts to find the impulse to use a word or a phrase, then move into verbal improvisation

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## Actor's Insight — Amy Ingram

### What appeals to you about this play?

*Fat Pig* has guts! Excuse the pun. But it does. It is smart and ballsy, it makes you laugh, then question why in the hell you are laughing. It shakes you up and to me that is exciting theatre. One of the most exciting aspects of this play is the audience and the role it plays. In one sense the audience is the final character in this piece. Every audience is different and every audience will take away something of their own from the story, but collectively they will hopefully feel the ups and downs as we do. This is the beauty of theatre but especially in the case of *Fat Pig*, as the audience is really forced to go along with us. It jars you, slaps you around a little a bit, the audience gets to have fun, laugh at or with us and then you see the consequences of those actions and once again the play has taken you in another direction. So before I start going off on a million tangents, *Fat Pig* is in no way preaching to anyone or telling you what to feel, it just makes you think ... and perhaps question a few of those social constructs and expectations swimming around in your head. Oh yeah, and did I mention *Fat Pig* is funny? You've got to love that.



### As a performer how do you meet the 'comedic' needs and moments on stage in every performance for the audience?

'Comedy is simply tragedy in fast forward'. Now someone famous or very clever said that. Who? I have no idea, but it has always stuck with me. Like with any role you have to search for the duality, the hidden, the other, the public versus private, the tragic versus the comedy. In many situations what is happening on stage is deadly serious to those characters — it just happens to be hilarious to you. So this brings me to my most important point — the truth. You have to find the truth within whatever character you are playing — whatever you are saying. You never play something just for the laugh, you have to marry the comedy to the truth. If you always look for the truth of the moment, usually the comedy will take care of itself especially if it is in the writing. Oh, and one other thing, have fun! Be bold. You are searching for the truth but have fun with it — take risks, go over the top, you can always pull back later, but if you are not having fun why on earth would the audience be?

### How does a professional actor such as yourself deal with playing the "fat pig" at the core of the play's message?

OOOOOh Tricky! *Fat Pig* is something that is said about Helen, but it is not how she views herself. As an actor you take in everything that is said in the play about you — you have to get the greatest scope about your character. The important part is to figure out where her view of herself lies. Does she buy into it? Does she believe it? In Helen's case she never actually hears what is said about her, but the fact that it is said still does affect her as it affects Tom and she is swayed by what he feels for her. I approach Helen in the same way I do any character. I start from me — how would I feel? How are we the same? Then I start to feel out how we are different both emotionally and physically. In the world of the play, Helen is viewed as a 'fat pig'. I take it on and hope that everything she is, fat, beautiful or otherwise, becomes a part of me as the character, so I can play her to the best of my ability and allow the audience to share in that.

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## Actor's Insight — Steven Rooke

**How do you bring depth to a character that can so easily just be perceived as, “the bad guy”?**

You can't look at your character as a 'bad guy.' I see Carter as the voice of truth. The guy inside us all, that speaks the unspeakable, but to whom we don't listen to.

I see him as exceptionally free because he has no filters.

**What have been some of the challenges in rehearsing this play?**

The main challenge is allowing yourself to indulge in the controversy, to forgive yourself for revelling in the darkness of the character. Then once you have done that, the other challenge is switching it off at the end of the day.

Morgan's directing style is different from anything I've worked with before, and while I now think it's great, there were times early in the process when I felt like I didn't know what I was doing.

**What do you do during the season to ensure that your character is still fresh and spontaneous by the last performance?**

Chris Sommers (Tom) and I have performed in other Queensland Theatre Company productions together. One in particular ran 94 performances across the season and very early on, we promised each other we would push each other to stay fresh. We have a great understanding of how we both work and if I'm struggling I know he's got my back. That's a great thing to have on stage.



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## Article — The Weight of The World

I'm a stress eater. When things get bad or even slightly tricky, I reach for a bag of chips or a bucket of popcorn and hunker down. My mother taught me this self-medicating trick years ago, and I've stood by it for a long time now. When in doubt, eat some Pringles. A few personal and professional mishaps led me straight back to the pantry and right off the beaten path. Or any path, for that matter. I can't remember the last time I exercised... Oh yeah, and I've also written several new plays. One of them with the jaunty title of *Fat Pig*. Now, I'm not saying that creativity is entirely linked to personal unhappiness, but I remember reading with awe and respect the stories about Eugene O'Neill crying out behind closed doors and clawing at his own face as he composed *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Nothing of the sort happened here, of course, but you can definitely hear the crunch and crackle of snack food being consumed during some of my best work.

I see a lot of myself in *Fat Pig*; whatever the name of the piece, the story really deals with human weakness and the difficulty many people face when trying to stand up for, live up to, or come out for something they believe in. And that's pretty much me in a nutshell – well-meaning as can be, but surprisingly lame when push really comes to shove. Heroism, it would seem, is a tough gig.

As for the characters who populate *Fat Pig*, I love them all because they are so desperately human – they want to have convictions but, in the end, they'd rather be liked or get their needs met. They're not conventionally likeable, perhaps, but they're absolutely recognisable as people. Actually, I don't ever worry too much about the audience liking my characters or wanting to see them in a sequel or buying some merchandise related to the show. Leave that to the movies. All I care about is creating individuals who are interesting. Interesting and as complex as people are in life. I hope I've done that here.

*Extracts from Preface to Fat Pig "The Weight of the World", by Neil LaBute, reprinted with permission of the author and Faber & Faber, New York.*

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## Article — Up With People

So Neil LaBute has a new play opening—another new play—his third in less than three years, making him the reigning prince of Off Broadway. This one is called *Fat Pig*, a gleefully harsh title, the barb of a wicked third-grader converted into high art. You read those two toothy words and you wince, then grin, then wince at yourself for grinning. That’s LaBute: funny in a mean way, or mean in a funny way, depending on your point of view. You emerge from his plays either praising him for the metaphoric slap in the face or simply wishing you knew where he lived, so you can hunt down the bastard and deliver a literal slap of your own.

The guy is doing something right, in short. To be a fan of LaBute’s is also to be his foe, to question and curse him. His cruel wit and chronicles of immoral moralizers have made him, arguably, the most legitimately provocative and polarizing playwright at work today. “I’m looking to cause trouble on the stage,” he says, chuckling a little ruefully, during a recent chat. In conversation he is glib, self-effacing, genuinely kind, and admittedly long-winded, schizophrenically linking seemingly disparate points, as if in constant re-evaluation of his own internal thesis. “I mean,” he goes on, “isn’t that the job description? To turn heads? To deliver something new? It’s not as if I want to be provocative for the sake of provoking. I at least try to make something that’s going to last beyond the momentary shock. I’m starting to ramble, aren’t I? Am I making sense?” In the past five years, he’s written and staged five plays—George C. Wolfe will be directing a sixth, *This Is How It Goes*, at the Public next year—and recently published a collection of short stories, *Seconds of Pleasure*.

It was 1997 when LaBute hit the culture with the first in a series of perverse dramas of cruelty: *In the Company of Men*, the story of two office drones who seduce and destroy a beautiful, sincere deaf woman. LaBute was deemed a repellent misogynist and a visionary cynic; critics sharpened their hatchets, famous actors asked him to lunch.

The irony of his Mormonism and devoted family life was duly noted. Over the next several years, he created the acid *Your Friends and Neighbors* and *The Shape of Things* (which, like *In the Company of Men*, was an adaptation of a LaBute play about an earnest dupe pranked by a manipulative lover—this time with the genders switched). But the real shocker was *The Mercy Seat*, which debuted a year after September 11, jolting New Yorkers with the story of a spineless man who would have died in the Twin Towers had he not skipped work for a quickie blow job from his mistress-boss. The timing was enough to cause jaded jaws to drop.

LaBute asserts that critics don’t bother him, though it’s a tough claim to take at face value. For one, he spends twenty minutes asserting this. Also, he’s become infamous in theater circles for sending notes to major critics—sometimes critiques of their critiques, sometimes thank-yous for their observations. (“I swear I’m just mucking it up,” he states vaguely.) The most persistent charge aimed at LaBute is that his protagonists are not so much real humans in a human world as vessels of distilled hate. “Okay, it’s true that I’ve been a bit of a cold fish,” LaBute concedes matter-of-factly. “I’m someone who has said, ‘Oh, here’s a person in pain. Let’s bring the microscope down closer.’” In the films *Nurse Betty* and *Possession* (both adapted from others’ writing), he’s attempted to depart from this bleak worldview, though the results were uninspired: the misanthrope clunking in the mainstream. It was *The Mercy Seat* that marked a truly subtle shift in tone for LaBute, the cursory introduction of something new: genuine emotion in the form of human weakness.

Which brings us to *Fat Pig*. “I guess in the past my interest has really been in the opposite of weakness, in power or cruelty or maliciousness,” explains LaBute, who isn’t directing this time out. He decided to work on writing, pursue other projects, and decompress after his first truly bitter experience in film: He adapted Amanda Filipacchi’s novel *Vapor*, only to have it axed by Warner Bros. at the eleventh hour. “Yeah, it’s a strange business, but aren’t all businesses? Anyway, what was I saying? Oh, *Fat Pig*. Right. In this one, people hurt each other, yes, but I think sometimes they do so out of kindness and honesty. Wait a second—which draft did you read? Because I’ve made some changes that I think really flesh that out . . .”

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Another in a series of diabolically simple plots, *Fat Pig* is bound to resonate uncomfortably with New Yorkers. A man named Tom hits it off with a woman named Helen, who happens to be a touch large. This doesn't sit well with Tom's friends, Carter and Jeannie, two LaBute archetypes: sometimes sage, sometimes stupid, almost always nasty. *Fat Pig* was inspired in part by LaBute's own experiment with Atkins—losing 60 pounds in the past year, then gaining most of it back. “Typically, I'm not one to rip from my own life,” he says, but this time he's done just that. “On one hand, what I was doing was healthy, but on the other, I saw it as a lot of wasted time on the self.” The play's overt mission is to put our carb-counting, *Extreme Makeover* nation in the crosshairs. How much has our relentless pursuit of beauty turned us into an uglier species? Does love need society's blessing to be complete? Despite the gimmicky title, LaBute hopes that *Fat Pig* will be understood as more than a satire of modern humanity beating against the Botox current. “That element is just the surface,” he explains. “It's really a study in weakness, a play about Tom's journey. Helen is the most centered character onstage. I want to know if Tom can rise above himself, if he can reconcile his public and private selves. Can he be honest? Can he be truthful? It's an examination of what it means to love, which is really a new place for me.”

A year ago, writing in *Slate*, LaBute remarked: “I am only interested in my work concluding in a way that is true to the characters and the tale, without concern for the audience.” But he's got a dedicated audience now, one that's come to anticipate the LaBute ending: the malicious twist, in which the demonic prevails. It's an essential part of how an audience must engage with him—you have to wrestle with his incendiary moral perspective or risk being trampled—but coming from someone so prolific, it runs the risk of turning into shtick. LaBute knows this. With *Fat Pig*, he seems to be shifting slowly from abstract plot tricks to something more nuanced, yet more unsettling: the emotional crisis of a guy unable to accept his plus-size girlfriend—male angst, minus the sadism. “What a setup, I know,” LaBute says, and there's that sly laugh again. “You've got this girl who's dying to be misused.” It would be a disservice here to spoil the finale, but let's just say that LaBute goes beyond crude misuse and pulls off a deft little stunt: an ending that's wholly crushing, but not quite hopeless. “In a weird way, this is my most hopeful ending yet,” he says. And unlike the prickish charmers that are his speciality, he sounds like he means it.

*Published in New York Magazine, May 2005 Issue. All reasonable attempts to contact the author prior to printing have been made.*

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## Article – The Allure of the Larger Woman

The female body has always been a symbol of beauty, seduction and fertility. But size 6 wasn't always considered sexy. In different times and places it's been the larger woman turning heads, and for all the right reasons.

Ever opted for that 99% fat free alternative? Or compared your body to those of women in magazines? The ideal figure of female beauty has yo-yoed, like a bad diet, from fuller figured women to boyish shapes and back again. So why now are we coveting the slimmest silhouettes yet? It seems that beauty is determined by various social factors. Whilst some beauty rituals are directly linked to these factors, some are outright bizarre ranging from foot binding and teeth filing to having no body hair and neck stretching. Beauty in Western culture seems to stem directly from the issue of weight and size. Our present fascination with waifish women wasn't always the case, as history tells us.

Dating back to the ancient Egyptians comes one of the most popular female icons of history – Cleopatra. Over the years she has undergone thousands of representations and is renowned for being a powerful sex symbol. Whilst Marc Antony was pleased with her looks, archaeologists have uncovered evidence suggesting that she was a strange looking woman, by our modern standards, with a remarkably large nose. But if it wasn't for her big schnoz our conceptions of beauty, today, would be different. One nose, in fact, influenced the face (and body) of beauty.

Another famous and beautiful woman is the Venus de Milo. Despite the absence of arms she remains a fuller figured woman recognised for her beauty. The goddess of love becomes the benchmark for beautiful bigger women dating from the Ancient Greeks and is often depicted with curves. Women with bigger bones were deemed the most beautiful for hundreds of years as procreation was the number one agenda in most cultures. A suitable and sexy wife would require large hips so as to bear many healthy children.

The Baroque period of the late 17th century, most known for the painter Peter Paul Rubens, illustrated voluptuous women with wobbly bosoms, bottoms and bellies inventing the term “Rubenesque”. A word which is repeatedly used today – often as a euphemism on dating websites.

In the 18th century the pear was the body shape of choice with little breasts and a large bottom. These big bootied women were required to partake in physical labour which resulted in a toned and muscular physique which added to their sex appeal. A century later Western women were ushered indoors and became fragile, dainty and stuffed into corsets giving them a more rectangular shape. The corset then evolved giving women waistlines of twelve inches and much bigger hips. The ideal waistline at that time allowed a man the ability to rest his hands on the woman's waist with his hands touching. The hourglass shape made its first appearance and followed through the late 19th century. Curves took a backseat in the early 20th century as women began to bind down their breasts to achieve a boyish figure. Then the 50s rolled around and Marilyn Monroe took the world by storm with her curvaceous lines. She is still one of the most enduring figures of modern popular culture.

The 60s made way for the big-eyed and even bigger eyelashes of Twiggy, a model and actress who was known for her stick-thin figure. This paved the way for today's models who seem to be getting taller and thinner as time goes by. With this in mind, why is it that the Western woman strives to achieve the thinner figure? There are many cultures around the world that deliberately fatten their women as a sign of health, fertility and overall beauty. Twiggy wouldn't get a look in. Despite phases of thinner women being seen as ideal, the recurring theme throughout history is that bigger women are alluring. At the moment the sexiest woman in Britain is chef Nigella Lawson, who flaunts her curves and encourages women to enjoy their food and be proud of their bodies. As history proves there seems to be an ongoing physiological attraction to 'real-sized' women, despite what the arbiters of high fashion are telling us. Although there have been various trends throughout history and across the globe, it seems our innate urge is to fight against thin fashion fads and to embrace a bigger, beautiful future. The question is – are we big enough to openly accept it?

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## Satire

- Satire is a comedic device used by writers to bring an audience to a point of recognition with subject matter.
- It is often making social/political statements and principally ridicules its subject, thus intending to encourage an audience to have realisations about themselves or those around them and in turn provoking or preventing change E.g. Many comedians use satire to bring to light social injustices and ignorance.
- It comes down to context and ones own personal experiences as to whether something offends or enlightens, hence satire can be a controversial form of humour.

## Romantic Comedy

- *Fat Pig* could be described as a Romantic Comedy (Romcom)
- It contains most of the 'formula' of a contemporary 'Romcom', including, strong humorous elements revolving around the theme of 'love', satire, love interests, 'best friend' of the hero, awkward moments and losing love.
- LaBute has written the play in such a way that it is 'filmic' in structure. It has short scenes with concentrated dialogue, a linear narrative set in the present, and familiar naturalistic dialogue between the characters.
- It's a style that has become a trademark for actors such as Hugh Grant, now a poster boy for the genre, and allowed him to create a career from playing a bumbling, good-intentioned, yet naïve protagonist.
- The edge *Fat Pig* has in comparison with other stories included in the Romcom genre, is the satirical, confronting situations throughout the play, with an ending that could leave the audience uncomfortable and dissatisfied. This is something that the traditional Hollywood genre of Romcoms avoids.

## Comedy & Audience Response

- While the audience may walk away from the play feeling uncomfortable, disgusted or dissatisfied, it's this kind reaction that LaBute sees as an important catalyst for discussion over the issues at hand.
- Our recognition of Carter, played by Steven Rooke, for example, could be a distilled and amplified version of something that is inside all of us. To laugh at a joke requires some understanding and empathy of the content. Sometimes, this is more exposing of our own unacknowledged ideologies, thoughts and ideas, than we'd like to admit. For example, does laughing at a joke told at the expense of an individual, a race, or religion place the same amount of responsibility on us, as it does the person who told it?

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## Post-Performance Discussion Questions

- Thinking about the performance of *Fat Pig* as a whole, how is the use of tempo and rhythm exploited to best deliver a comedic result? What results, when this is contrasted with moments of more serious content? Use specific moments in the play to support your answer.
- Identifying specific scenes and moments from the play, discuss the negative consequences of peer pressure, and how these consequences could be used in a positive way for personal growth.
- Consider the set and identify specific moments where the characters interacted with it. How do you think the set design helped in creating a world for the characters to exist within? What elements of the set design supported the story and the characters' interaction?
- What is the message Neil LaBute is offering in his play? Is there a clear moral?
- Make a list of themes presented in this play. Use examples from the production to justify your answers.
- How do you think *Fat Pig* is relevant to a young audience?
- Describe some of the satirical and confronting moments used by the playwright, Neil LaBute, in making sure that the audience's values are challenged throughout the play. Make reference to the dialogue, action, title of the play and the production as a whole.

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## Script Excerpt One

JEANNIE: Hey. (Smiles.) Got a minute?

TOM: Oh, hi. There.

JEANNIE: I forgot some . . . here. (*Holds up an extra file.*) Forgot this one.

TOM: Ah. Thanks. Ummm . . .

*TOM gets up and crosses to her, reaching for the folder. She holds it a moment, and they both tug on it.*

JEANNIE: So . . . is it true, what he said?

TOM: Who, Carter?

JEANNIE: Yeah.

TOM: Ummm . . .

JEANNIE: Oh. (*Beat.*) So where does that put us, then? I mean, I thought -

TOM: No, I'm not saying it's . . . he's an idiot, so, you know, you have to make some allowances.

JEANNIE: Right. (*Grins.*) That's true . . .

TOM: But . . . I don't know what I'm doing. You know that, I'm -

JEANNIE: Yes, I do. All while we were going out I could tell that, but I still liked you. Gave you a million or so chances, but . . . hey. Whatever.

TOM: I know that, Jeannie, I know, I'm just . . . it's complicated.

JEANNIE: I'm not saying that I'm some, you know, *glamour queen*, but guys do like me. They do.

TOM: I know, come on . . . *please*. I like you. Don't say it like that.

JEANNIE: Yeah, well . . . I wish you'd fire up a signal flare every now and then. (*Smiles.*) Could use it over here.

TOM: Sorry. I do, though.

JEANNIE: Doesn't seem like it. I mean, I've tried sweet and forceful and, you know, *nonchalant* . . . everything. I don't get it. What do you want me to do here?

TOM: *Nothing*. I'm -

JEANNIE: *What?* (*Beat.*) So, just tell me. Is he lying or not?

TOM: Carter is . . . I mean, by nature he's a liar. You know that. He likes to provoke people. Get 'em riled up.

JEANNIE: Which says nothing.

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TOM: Jeannie, Come on . . .

JEANNIE: So you are.

TOM: I'm not . . . no. I'm not "seeing" any other person, all right? Promise.

JEANNIE: Look, I'm just asking, so don't make it seem like I'm pulling on your eyeteeth or something. If you don't wanna tell me, then okay.

TOM: I'm saying it, to you, right now.

JEANNIE: Yeah, but . . .

TOM: Carter's an ass. He's . . .

JEANNIE: So why do you hang out with him then? Huh? All those guys down in Development. (*Beat.*) Why?

TOM: Because . . . I'm needy and shallow. (*Smiles.*) Hell, I dunno! Because we all . . . started out here together, and it's you know, it's easier to go along sometimes, to just hang out and not make, like, some big tsunami or that kind of thing. I know it's dumb, but . . . he's *funny*. He doesn't bug me that much.

JEANNIE: Obviously.

TOM: Jeannie, come one, don't be . . . he's just playing around.

JEANNIE: So, nobody then?

TOM: I didn't . . . I'm not saying . . . What?

JEANNIE: Don't do your circles thing, okay? Do not do that -

TOM: What're you even - ?

JEANNIE: Talking around shit, that's what I'm saying. I hate that! Are-you-dating-someone?

TOM: No. Kind of. Hell, I dunno! I'm . . . It's not some big thing.

JEANNIE: I see.

TOM: Look, we said that we could . . . I'm not doing anything, like, *wrong*.

JEANNIE: But you're pretty defensive about it.

TOM: Yeah, because . . . because you get all . . . you know how you are.

JEANNIE: I'm not *anything*. Except confused.

Queensland Theatre  
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# *Fat Pig*

by Neil LaBute

## Classroom Activities

### FORMING AND PRESENTING

- Give each student a copy of the script excerpt on page 14.
- Divide class into pairs, read through the excerpt as a class and using a pen, identify the different ideas that the characters have throughout the piece. Briefly discuss what the characters are saying and its meaning, but leave room for the students to continue to explore the piece, developing their own interpretation.
- Students in pairs are then to perform a silent version of the scene, without scripts but working from what they understood from the initial discussion and read. They don't need to 'act out' exactly the scene without words, just their knowledge of what happens in the scene.
- Students are to re-read the script aloud with their partner, and notice the moments they remembered and what moments they left out. They are to read the script a couple of times at this point to gain a stronger understanding of the scene.
- Continue rehearsing the scene with action only, but students are to slowly integrate specific dialogue during each run of the scene. They can choose lines that they feel are important to the moments they are 'acting out'. Students add more lines each time they run the scene. Students are to maintain as much eye contact as possible. Encourage them to concentrate on how their own body moves during the moments and to notice how their partner's body responds when there are no spoken words.
- Gradually, students are to memorise the whole scene. This process may take some time. Discuss with the students how they felt in terms of exploring and rehearsing a scene this way — learning lines and gaining character and relationships understanding through this process.

### FORMING, PRESENTING AND RESPONDING

- Divide students into groups of four. One student from each group may act as a director.
- Students are to devise two alternate versions of one role play.
- Emphasise to the students that there needs to be a point of tension and then find resolution.
- Ask the students to present the first version of the scene as a 'drama'.
- The second version of the scene needs to be delivered with 'comedy'.
- After showing the two versions to the class, students can work at combining the two styles into the scene in order to create a piece that has a balance of the two styles. They are to specifically choose where it is appropriate to inject the moments with comedy or drama.

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# ***Fat Pig***

**by Neil LaBute**

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