

THE
STUDIO
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LAURISTON



THE
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TRUST



Constellations

by Nick Payne



Altrincham Garrick
PLAYHOUSE

Tuesday 1 –
Sunday 6
February 2022

Sponsored by

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Welcome

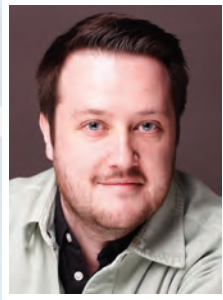
from the Garrick's Artistic Director

Hello, and welcome to our first Lauriston Studio production of 2022. Nick Payne's "*Constellations*" has garnered tremendous acclaim wherever it has been staged, and seems to have attracted a host of wonderfully talented actors wanting to portray the roles of Roland and Marianne. Last year's revival of this play in London saw four alternative casts taking part on different nights, with each couple bringing their own fresh interpretation of the script to audiences. In welcoming Pete Brassington as a new director to the Garrick - although he may already be familiar to our audiences from numerous appearances on both of our stages - I'm also delighted that, owing to the array of young talent from which we are able to cast productions, we have also had the opportunity to create two alternative casts for our staging of this tremendous play. I sincerely hope that both Pete and his companies have a hugely successful and enjoyable week.

Don't forget to pick up your copy of our Season Brochure with full details of everything that's happening here between now and July. Thankyou for coming, have a safe journey home afterwards, and we hope to see you back at the Garrick soon!

Joseph Meighan

Artistic Director, Altrincham Garrick Playhouse



Introduction

by the Production's Director

"Every choice, every decision you've ever and never made exists in an unimaginably vast ensemble of parallel universes."



Good evening and the warmest of welcomes to The Altrincham Garrick Theatre's performance of "*Constellations*" by Nick Payne. Thank you for joining us on this incredible rollercoaster of a play... or have you?

We are delighted to be bringing this piece to life in the brilliant Lauriston Studio space. "*Constellations*" really came into the mainstream of theatrical culture after the popular run last year in the Vaudeville Theatre in London. I have always wanted to direct in the Lauriston, so when the opportunity came along to bring this wonderful play to life, I was very excited to get going!

There are huge complex themes being visited here, the concept of multiverses, time and space, but without wanting to reveal anything further, we are posing some potential answers to the question "A Beekeeper and a String Theorist meet at a Barbecue. What happens next?" The play is stylistically naturalistic in its dialogue, but completely the opposite when it comes to how it's framed. This meant we could have the best of both worlds, creating a space where anything is possible, whilst keeping human nature at the heart of the performance.

Due to the strength of the auditions, I felt we had no choice but to put two casts together, it made complete sense! It's been both challenging and adventurous in the best possible way and I'm so happy with how it's turned out. I want to say a huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to putting this piece together, Antonia, Jamie, Imogen and Jacob for their hard work, talent and patience throughout. To the Lighting and Sound crews, for which no show would ever be possible. To Joe for his support and taking a chance on a director making his debut. And finally to yourselves, for continuing to support live theatre in such a strange and difficult time. I hope you enjoy "*Constellations*" as much as we've enjoyed putting it together!

Pete Brassington

Some things you might need to know...

Universe

All matter and energy, including Earth, the galaxies, and the contents of space. (NASA)

Cosmology

The branch of astronomy involving the origin and evolution of the universe, from the Big Bang to today and on into the future. (space.com)

Light Year

A light-year is how astronomers measure distance in space. It's defined by how far a beam of light travels in one year - a distance of six trillion miles. (earthsky.org)

Multiverse

A theoretical reality that includes a possibly infinite number of parallel universes. (merriam-webster.com)

Quantum Mechanics

Deals with the mathematical description of the motion and interaction of subatomic particles. (Google)

General Relativity

Einstein's theory about the interaction between spacetime and matter: space-time is a dynamic entity, which is distorted by any matter that is contained in it, and which in turn tells that matter how to move and evolve. (einstein-online.info)

String Theory

A theory in physics in which tiny string-like objects have modes of vibration that correspond to elementary particles. Such objects exist in a space-time that has more dimensions than the familiar three dimensions of space. (thefreedictionary.com)

This amateur production of "*Constellations*" is presented by special arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd., on behalf of SAMUEL FRENCH LTD. www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

Nick Payne talks about *Constellations*

What sparked the idea?

It was probably about bees and bee keeping, I watched a documentary called *Vanishing of the Bees*, and it was about how bees are dying out in the US and how they are farming bees too intensively and that was the starting point. I sort of worried about how you could do bees on stage. So I decided not to go down the bee play route, so by chance I watched a documentary called *The Elegant Universe* by Brian Green and it was amazing. It was a history of contemporary theoretical physics and right at the end he touched on this idea of the Multiverse.

How did you bring the idea of Multiverse and Bee-keeping together?

Well I guess I like that the multiverse stuff was so theoretical, so I spoke to a cosmologist. I asked her "when you're at a party and you get asked what you do for living what do you say?" And she said "I study the origin and fate of the universe", and I thought that was a pretty amazing way of describing your job. I liked that Bee-keeping is a micro endeavour, it's very clear you're investing in a specific eco system and how you go about maintaining that. So I met a bee keeper who is an artisan bee keeper, so he is very careful about the way he works and how he makes his honey. It's a kind a job one man does on his own; he drives around London, visiting these hives looking after the bees. In one sense his job isn't theoretical at all but the cosmologist can be quite isolated. Again, I spoke to someone and the way they work is by analysing data from one tiny bit of the galaxy, so I felt like in a way both their jobs (the beekeeper and cosmologist) have different roles, but they essentially work alone, and they have to compartmentalise their work to get it done. I guess overall I just didn't want to let go of the bee stuff.

How did you find the form of the piece?

I guess I took the idea of multiverse and everything we do will exist in a massive ensemble of universes; it is theoretically simultaneous, so right now we're having this conversation, you're wearing a different jumper, I'm wearing different shoes and you're using a pen and paper instead of an iPad. So it could be something tiny that is different, it's like a branch of a tree that comes into existence when another possibility is theoretically possible. I thought it would be an amazing form for a play, so I wrote loads of material and edited it down. I wrote maybe a third more than what was actually in the play and then cut it out.

Were they longer scenes or was it that you had more possibilities?

There were a few more possibilities; there was another chunk in their life, and in one version Marianne was pregnant, in another she couldn't get pregnant, and another she was going to adopt, but it somehow felt like one step too many in the play, so it got cut out. There were one or two more universes. I wanted the story to be incredibly simple. I hoped, if the form is difficult to get on board with, that the story wouldn't be at all. The rule I set was that it must be the

first and last of everything, something I stole from *Closer*. It's the first time they meet, their first date, their first break up, they get married, and then she's very ill. So the idea was including the key bits of their life.

Once you found the form, did you write it quickly?

I actually wrote most of it in Georgia, when I was working with the International Department at The Royal Court. I was really jet-lagged and I couldn't sleep, so I would work from two 'til four in the morning. The first bit in the play is really stupid when Marianne talks about licking her elbow, but when I wrote it I was a bit woozy and at the time I thought it was really funny. From then I wrote the first draft in two weeks, and then after that it took a period of months.

What would you like the audience to take away from your exploration of Marianne and Roland's different worlds?

With *Constellations* I found the theory really interesting, this was because in some ways I found it quite moving knowing that someone who had died could be living in a different universe. It felt romantic yet unnerving because I'll never know. There's a moment in the play in the biopsy section where all the situations are bad news where she is terminally ill, yet there is one where the tumour is benign. That is my favourite bit as she is completely fine; there was something about the finite of life. Her journey is about her expecting she is going to die, it changes her and their relationship. I was interested in examining the scope of Marianne and Roland's personality, because anatomically they are composed of the same elements, yet slightly rearranged in another universe, I didn't want them to be completely different as I could release the audience from any sense of emphasising with the causality of what they're doing.



What aspect of the play did you enjoy the most?

The actors. It's always so much fun. Also the design, it's the first thing I had worked on where there was nothing about the play that necessarily meant there was a design feature that had to occur, there didn't have to be a kitchen, there didn't have to be a chair, I love what Tom did and how imaginative it was, how releasing it was, I didn't imagine anything like that. Also Lee, the lightning designer, has a background in dance so he was great in lighting bodies and movement, instead of faces, which was great. I loved how releasing the play was for everyone else and that in a way, they could do whatever they felt was imaginatively accurate and interesting rather than having to be literal about it at any point, and that went for the actors too, they could make their own choices.

What have been some of your favourite moments in seeing your work on stage?

The final performance of *Constellations* Upstairs at the Royal Court Theatre was pretty special. I was sat behind ex-New Yorker critic John Lahr, and I spent the whole show nervously-as-fuck watching him scribble away on his New Yorker-branded notepad (at least, that is my memory of it now).

The Casts & Production Team

Tues 1, Thurs 3 & Sat 5 February:

Marianne **Antonia Whitehead**

Roland **Jamie Sloan**

Weds 2, Fri 4 & Sun 6 February:

Marianne **Imogen Kite**

Roland **Jacob Taylor**

Director **Pete Brassington**

Set & Sound Design **Pete Brassington**

Set Construction **Paul Simpson**

Lighting Design **Geoff Scullard**

..... **Pete Brassington**

Prompt **Megan Brassington**

Lighting and Sound **Stuart Kilburn**

..... **Geoff Scullard**

Properties **David Ades**

BSL Consultant **Heidi Foss**

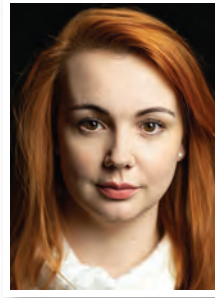


Pete Brassington (Director)

Pete graduated from Trinity St. David's with a degree in Acting, and after moving to Manchester he made his debut at the Garrick in 2016 playing the over-the-top Prince Regent in *The Madness of George III*. Since then he has acted in multiple shows of many different varieties including the simplistic *Rudge* in *The History Boys*, the creepy *Raymond* in *Nightmare*, and the comic lead *Jack* in the famous pantomime *Dick Whittington*. Some of Peter's Lauriston Studio credits include the 5-star *Orphans*, *The Truth About Blokes* which was selected for the Greater Manchester Fringe, and the well-received Phillip Meeks telling of *Edith in the Dark* in late 2019. Pete is absolutely delighted to be making his directorial debut with the brilliant *Constellations*. He hopes everyone thoroughly enjoys the production!

Without our incredibly dedicated, enthusiastic team of **Volunteers and Staff**, whose sheer hard work often goes unnoticed, Altrincham Garrick Playhouse would simply be unable to continue providing such a range of top quality productions for you to enjoy.

With their continuous commitment to excellence, we owe them a huge debt of gratitude.



Antonia Whitehead

Antonia, a Stockport native, is delighted to be making her return to Altrincham Garrick, after playing *Blair* in *Fatal Attraction* in January 2020. Other theatre experience includes *Celia* in *As You Like It* with Cream-Faced Loons Theatre Company, and the accompanying web series *The Reel Ceels*. Since graduating from SLP College in 2015, Antonia trains and works regularly with Both Feet Actor Training, and has appeared in productions of *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *The Roundheads* by Aphra Behn and *Playing God* with Viaduct Theatre Company. With a passion for musical theatre and a love of dance; Antonia has appeared in productions of *Chicago*, *The Producers* and a pantomime or two... (Oh, yes she has!)

Antonia has greatly enjoyed exploring the multiverse in *Constellations* and would like to thank her amazing parents and brother for putting up with her constant chatter about string theory, and her friends, family and colleagues for their continued support for all her endeavours. She hopes you enjoy watching the show as much as she has enjoyed working on it.



Jamie Sloan

In this universe Jamie has performed in many Altrincham Garrick productions, including *Vincent in Brixton* (2016), *Handbagged* (2017), *These Shining Lives* (2017), *Stones in His Pockets* (2018), *Around the World in 80 Days* (2018), and *Jeeves and Wooster* (2020). When not treading the boards, Jamie can often be found ballroom dancing at Topaz Dance Studio in Stretford. Across the infinite possibilities of the multiverse, perhaps there's a Jamie who has appeared on *Strictly Come Dancing*, or even one who likes Marmite!



Imogen Kite

Constellations will be Imogen's Garrick debut after just graduating from studying Theatre and Performance at Salford University. Imogen has previously performed in productions such as *Blue Stockings* and *A Taste of Honey*, as well as multiple plays and performances during University. She fell in love with *Constellations* as soon as she read it and thought of all the ways it could be interpreted. This was possibly her favourite part of the rehearsal process as she was able to see the play, and her character Marianne, come to life in a different way than she had initially imagined.



Jacob Taylor

This is Jacob's 3rd appearance in the Lauriston Studio, and he's absolutely loved being back. He's previously starred in *Vincent in Brixton* (alongside Jamie) and then in *Greyhounds* with Time and Again Theatre Company as they prepared for the 2018 Edinburgh Fringe. His only other performance at the Garrick was in *The History Boys* with Peter. Most of his amateur theatre work has been in Crewe, treading the boards at the Lyceum including roles as *Danny* in *Grease* and soon to be *Felicia* in *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*. Jacob has also worked professionally on stage and on screen.

Constellations

Constellations premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in January 2012, with **Rafe Spall** and **Sally Hawkins** in the lead roles and direction by **Michael Longhurst**. The play received strong reviews from critics and subsequently transferred to the Duke of York's Theatre in the West End in November 2012. The reviewer for *The Guardian* wrote "For all its teasing razzle-dazzle, though, it is the human warmth of the writing and acting that ensures the play never slides into tricksiness."

In November 2012 *Constellations* was named the winner of the best play category at the Evening Standard Theatre Awards, making the then 29-year-old Payne the youngest winner of the award. It also received several nominations at the 2013 Olivier Awards.

The play subsequently premiered on Broadway in a Manhattan Theatre Club production at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre on January 13, 2015 and closed on 15 March 2015. The cast starred **Jake Gyllenhaal** (in his Broadway debut) and **Ruth Wilson**. The latter received a nomination for *Best Performance By a Leading Actress in a Play* at the 2015 Tony Awards, while the play also received three Drama League Award nominations: *Best Play*, *Best Actor*, Gyllenhaal, and *Best Actress*, Wilson.

In January 2013 Nick Payne revealed that a film adaptation was under way. That plan has since been shelved.

A production of *Constellations* subsequently toured the UK, starting in May 2015 at Woking's New Victoria Theatre.

In November 2015, the Chinese-language première was directed and translated by **Wang Chong** in Beijing. He used 13 cameras on the stage to conceptualise the play into a "stage movie", with 50 long takes as the 50 scenes. The result was a very intimate cinematic experience inside a theatre. A real hamster was also put on the stage as if it was the god of time and universe who dictated the cuts of the "movie" and the possibilities of life. Because of the show's success, the actress **Wang Xiaohuan** was noted by *The Beijing News* as China's "Young Theatre Artist of the Year".

Since then, the play has premiered in Montreal and Toronto, Perth, Washington D.C., and at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, in a production directed by **Giovanna Sardelli** that featured **Ginnifer Goodwin** and (Downton Abbey's) **Allen Leech**.

Constellations returned to West End at the Vaudeville Theatre for a limited run in June 2021, produced by the Donmar Warehouse. Again directed by **Michael Longhurst**, the production featured four alternative casts: **Sheila Atim & Ivanno Jeremiah**, **Peter Capaldi & Zoë Wanamaker**, **Omari Douglas & Russell Tovey**, and **Anna Maxwell Martin & Chris O'Dowd**.



Nick Payne

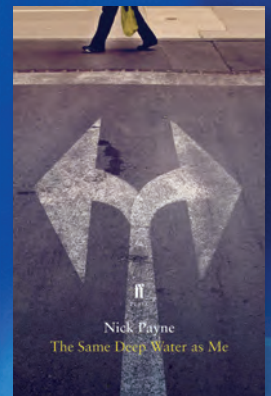
Nick is a playwright and screenwriter who won the prestigious *George Devine Award* in 2009 with his play *If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet*. It was produced at the Bush Theatre in October 2009, starring **Rafe Spall**, before going to the Roundabout Theatre, New York in 2012, starring **Jake Gyllenhaal**.

Nick studied at the Central School of Speech and Drama and the University of York, making his debut at the Royal Court Theatre in September 2010 with his comedy *Wanderlust*, a comic look at sex and intimacy which was directed by **Simon Godwin** and featuring **Charles Edwards** and **Pippa Haywood**, and was later adapted into a BBC TV / Netflix series starring **Toni Collette** and **Steven Mackintosh** as *Joy* and *Alan*, a couple in search of ways to save their marriage.

Following *Constellations*, Nick's other plays have included *A Life*, a meditation on how we say goodbye to those we love most, which ran at The Public Theater and on Broadway in 2019, featuring **Jake Gyllenhaal**, and was nominated for several Tony Awards; *Elegy*, a moving story of three women who've made the choice between love and survival, which starred **Barbara Flynn**, **Zoe Wanamaker** and **Nina Sosanya** in the Donmar Warehouse production; *The Same Deep Water As Me*, a play set in the world of compensation claims and injury lawyers, which was nominated for the *Best New Comedy* Olivier Award in 2014; *Blurred Lines*, a play exploring contemporary gender politics which was staged at the National Theatre's The Shed, with **Marion Bailey**, **Ruth Sheen** and **Claire Skinner**; *The Art of Dying*; *Incognito*; *Electra* and *One Day When We Were Young*, a play about the impact of the Second World War on the lives and loves of two people.

Nick also writes for Film, TV and Radio. Nick adapted **Julian Barnes'** *The Sense Of An Ending* for BBC Films which was released in 2017 starring **Jim Broadbent**, **Charlotte Rampling**, **Michelle Dockery**, **Emily Mortimer** and **Billy Howle**, whilst *Nora*, a short film in response to Ibsen's *A Dolls House*, was directed by **Carrie Cracknell** and featured **Hattie Morahan**.

Nick is currently developing a number of film and television projects in both the U.K. and the U.S.A.





The Lauriston Trust is an Educational Charitable Trust which was established in 1989 after the sale of Lauriston School.

The Trust's aim is to promote the arts in all its forms, primarily to young people in Trafford and Greater Manchester.

Among the groups to have benefited are the Altrincham Creative Theatre School, The Lauriston Studio at Altrincham Garrick Playhouse, Trafford's Youth Philharmonic Orchestra and the Lauriston Gallery at the Waterside Arts Centre in Sale, as well as individual beneficiaries. Altrincham violinist Tom Rowan-Young was able to attend summer schools in Italy which helped further his musical studies, while concert violinist Sophie Rosa, a student at the RNCM, was helped with funding for her place on the International Artist Diploma course in solo performance.

"We can help by offering grants and financial support to individuals or organisations. The grants may not always be large, but we have a receptive mindset and if we can help you make something happen..."

Anyone interested in finding out more should visit

www.lauristontrust.org.uk

The Lauriston Trust
c/o 33 Oldfield Road,
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Coming Soon in the Studio:

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Tuesday 15 – Sunday 20 March 2022



PIAF by Pam Gems

Directed by
Charlie Tomlinson

"You don't have to stay in the gutter just because you were born there..."

Born Edith Gassion in 1915, no one could have predicted Edith Piaf's phenomenal rise to fame – from singing in the streets of Paris to becoming one of France's biggest international stars, her voice is still revered to this day. But her extraordinary talent was matched with an equally extraordinary personal life...

Pam Gems has reworked her celebrated 1978 original, PIAF. She vividly captures the glamour and squalor, the rise and fall of the complex, fragile, and enigmatic performer Edith Piaf, who continues to be remembered and revered for her exceptional voice and extraordinary life. The play also features some of Piaf's most famous songs, including La Vie en Rose, Hymne à l'amour and Non, Je Ne Regrette Rien.

This amateur production of PIAF is presented by agreement with The Estate of Pam Gems.

THE
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Friday 1 & Saturday 2 April 2022



THE HISTORY GIRL⁺

by Elaine McCann & Dean Sumner

with additional material by Miranda Watkin

Performed by GAPA Classes 3 & 6

University is an opportunity for students to explore the subjects they love and to develop their skills. For Becky, it's also a time for indecision. Having second thoughts brings its own challenges. Becky's Lecturer, Laura, sees the makings of an outstanding student in Becky. It's just a case of finding the character from history that's going to turn her on to the subject.

Becky also finds herself falling for her course leader, Connor. As we share Becky's journey through history, we encounter the struggle for women's emancipation and the place of women in this world ...and someone else. Someone who believes in her cause. Someone in whose cause Becky can believe.

Will Becky find Kitty before she quits the course?

"This is the story about being able to learn from history... if we can't learn from history, then we're doomed to repeat it..."

THE
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Tuesday 17 – Sunday 22 May 2022

ROSS AND RACHEL

No one told them life was gonna be this way... by James Fritz

Ross & Rachel. You know the ones. Will they?

Won't they? On. Off. On again. Off again.

On a break. Vegas. Emma. "I got off the plane"... Directed by Carole Carr



Ross & Rachel tells the mind-bending, heart-breaking story of what happens when a couple that was always meant to be together, gets together. And stays together. James Fritz's play isn't about Ross Geller and Rachel Green, the ultimate Friends-turned-lovers. But it's not - not about them.

A dark and uncompromising play that explores romance, expectation and mortality, and the idea of 'happy-ever-after' – sold to us by rom-coms and sitcoms, whether it's Ross and Rachel or Romeo and Juliet – and how this affects our real-life relationships.

Suitability: 14+. Contains strong language and scenes that some may find disturbing.

This amateur production of ROSS AND RACHEL is presented by arrangement with Nick Hern Books.

NEXT WEEK!

**Monday 7 –
Saturday 12 February 2022**



ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST

by

Dale Wasserman

Based on the novel by

Ken Kesey

**GARRICK
ENSEMBLE**

Directed by

Joseph Meighan

The **Garrick Ensemble** is a company of 18 – 30 year old aspiring actors from Greater Manchester and Cheshire who perform one production each year as part of the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse Main House Season.

The Garrick Ensemble aims to make theatre that is fresh, innovative and exciting.

See the very best of local, up and coming talent before they move forward in the next stages of their careers in the Arts.

This amateur production of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* is presented by special arrangement with Concord Theatricals Ltd., on behalf of Samuel French Ltd. www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

Boisterous, ribald and ultimately shattering, **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest** is the unforgettable story of a mental hospital and its inhabitants. When a brash new inmate arrives, the rigid program of the ward, headed by the tyrannical Nurse Ratched, is thrown up for grabs.

In a world where sanity means conformity and following the rules is the only way to survive, **One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest** is a powerful exploration of both the beauty and the danger of being an original.

Volatile and dark, humorous and thought-provoking, this play (based on the classic 1962 novel by Ken Kesey and the 1972 film starring Jack Nicholson, which won five major Academy awards) is a true cult classic.

WARNING: this production contains strong language and adult themes.

Book NOW on 0161 928 1677 or online

Designed and produced for the Altrincham Garrick Playhouse by Nick Sample Creative Graphic Design 07950 332 645 njcsample1@mac.com www.nicksample.co.uk