

MANAHATTA

MARY KATHRYN NAGLE

WORLD PREMIERE



Tanis Parenteau (Jane/Le-le-wa'-you)

FROM THE DIRECTOR

When creating art, I like to do things that scare me. Well, “like” might be an oversimplification, but I do know that when my insides drop and my breath catches, I am treading in areas I need to examine. When reading Mary Kathryn Nagle’s *Manahatta*, my gut did a backflip. The play thrusts us into corporate America, where a Lenape woman dares to enter the male-dominated world of investment banking. Then immediately, she is pulled back to Anadarko, Oklahoma, where her family is mourning the death of her father. Nagle sets up a world that races at breakneck speed, where past, present and future collide together.

Manahatta is about many things: family, culture, oppression, resilience, violence, strength and legacy. What resonated is the tension that exists when a woman dares to be successful. Does success mean you

are selling out your culture? How does that ambition threaten family dynamics and expectations? What is the cost of breaking that glass ceiling? And how is that different when you are a woman of color?

But what really shocked me was connecting this story to the New York I am currently living in. As a transplant, I walked down streets named “Broadway” and “Amsterdam,” past housing developments named “Stuyvesant,” never realizing that this land was originally home to the Lenape and was where the Dutch built a wall (which Wall Street is named after) to keep them out. Every day, I looked at the same sunrise and walked on land that holds that trauma. So respectfully, we have been excavating this history out of the soil, rocks and roots of this sacred island despite being buried beneath cement, steel and glass. How could I not know this part of our nation’s history?

The answer lies in the power of who gets to tell these stories. As a Cherokee, Mary Kathryn collaborated with Curtis Zunigha, an enrolled member of the Delaware Tribe and our Lenape consultant, to tell this story. This is not a historical retelling but rather a window into how legacy walks alongside ambition and who is left out of the narrative. As I reflect on how we got here, it further confirms that history will continue to repeat itself unless we authentically interrogate where we’ve been.

—LAURIE WOOLERY