

The Minutes

By Tracy Letts

A Guide to: *The Minutes*

By Tracy Letts

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What's the Story of *The Minutes*?



Community, the Founder's Day celebration, the coveted privilege of reserved parking— Business as usual for the Big Cherry City Council. But... where are the minutes from last week's meeting? Newcomer Mr. Peel has some questions... What is

"Lincoln Smackdown"? And where is council member Mr. Carp? This razor-sharp comedy by the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *August: Osage County*, exposes the underbelly of civic duty in a small town...with BIG secrets.

Origins of *The Minutes*



The Minutes premiered at Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago, Illinois on November 9th, 2017, and closed on December 31st, 2017. The production, written by Steppenwolf company member Tracy Letts, was directed by Anna D. Shapiro. The cast starred Jeff Still, Ian Barford, Penny Slusher, Kevin Anderson, Cliff Chamberlain, James Vincent Meredith, Danny McCarthy, William Petersen, Brittany Burch, Francis Guinan, and Sally Murphy. *The Minutes* was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2018.

The Chicago production transferred to Broadway, beginning previews on February 20th, 2020 at the James Earl Jones Theatre in New York. Shapiro

returned to direct the show and cast members Ian Barford, Danny McCarthy, Sally Murphy, and Jeff Still reprised their roles from the Chicago production. Cast member Cliff Chamberlain, who had played Mr. Peel in the 2017 production, returned for the Broadway production, but now played Mr. Breeding. Armie Hammer was cast as Mr. Peel and playwright Tracy Letts joined the cast as Mayor Superba. Other notable cast members who joined in 2020 were Blair Brown, Jessie Mueller, and Austin Pendleton. The production was set to officially open on March 15th, 2020, but while in previews, it was shut down due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The production team made new plans to open on Broadway on March 15, 2022, now in Studio 54. The production became delayed again and began



previews on April 2nd, 2022, opening officially on April 17th, 2022. Armie Hammer was replaced with Noah Reid, making his Broadway debut. The remainder of the 2020 cast returned to the 2022 production. *The Minutes* closed on June 24th, 2022. The 2022 production received nominations for six Outer Critics Circle Awards, one Drama League Award, and one Tony Award (Best Play).

Writing The Play and More

To create the story of *The Minutes*, playwright Tracy Letts watched hundreds of hours of real city council



meetings. “If you’re having trouble sleeping, let me recommend watching city council meetings on YouTube. It’s painful,” Letts said about the videos in an interview with BUILD Series. Though they weren’t entertaining, he found them helpful for research. He found many instances of meetings going awry or council members behaving badly. Some of the script of *The Minutes* was taken verbatim from these meetings. Letts specifically mentioned that there was a conversation in one meeting about lost and stolen bicycles and what to do with them, which is now a major moment in the play.

About the Playwright: Tracy Letts



Tracy Letts has been a Steppenwolf ensemble member since 2002. He was awarded the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for his play *August: Osage County*, which played on Broadway for over a year, following a sold-out run at Steppenwolf in 2007. *August* also enjoyed a sold-out engagement at London's National Theatre and a U.S. National Tour in summer 2009. Other accolades include five Tony Awards

(including Best Play), an Olivier Award and six Jeff Awards (including Best Play).

Mr. Letts is also the author of *Superior Donuts*, which had its world premiere at Steppenwolf in 2008 and opened on Broadway in 2009; *Man from Nebraska*, which was produced at Steppenwolf in 2003 and was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize; *Killer Joe*, which has been produced in Chicago, London and New York; and *Bug*, which has played in New York, Chicago and London.

He has appeared at Steppenwolf in *Betrayal*, *The Pillowman*, *Last of the Boys*, *The Pain and the Itch*, *The Dresser*, *Homebody/Kabul*, *The Dazzle*, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (also in Dublin and Toronto), *Three Days of Rain*, *Road to Nirvana*, *Picasso at the Lapin Agile* and the Steppenwolf for Young Adults production of



The Glass Menagerie. Other Chicago stage credits include *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial* (A Red Orchid Theatre), *Conquest of the South Pole* (Famous Door), *Bouncers* (the Next Lab) and his directorial debut at the Lookingglass Theatre with *Great Men of Science Nos. 21 and 22*. He also appeared in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* at Atlanta's Alliance Theatre, directed by ensemble member Amy Morton.

Television credits include: *The District*, *Profiler*, *Prison Break*, *The Drew Carey Show*, *Seinfeld* and *Home Improvement*. Film appearances include *Guinevere*, *U.S. Marshals* and *Chicago Cab*.

Biography and headshot from [Concord Theatricals](#).

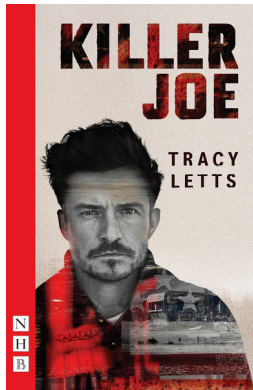
Learn More About Tracy Letts

For a more in-depth look at Tracy Letts check out the profile made by Actors Co-op Theatre Company: Origins.

[Celebrating the birth & legacy of Tracy Letts.](#)



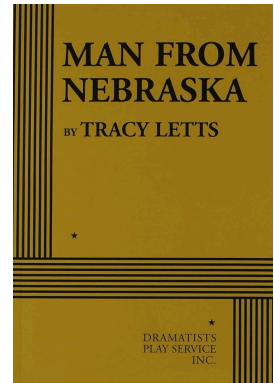
Additional Works by Tracy Letts



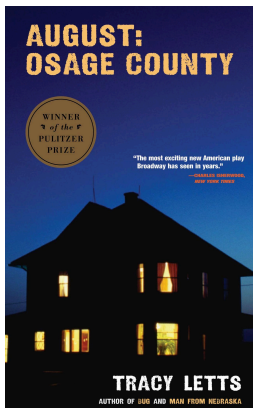
Killer Joe (1993)



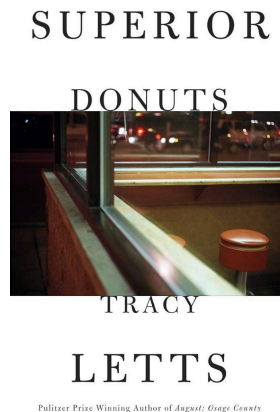
Bug (1996)



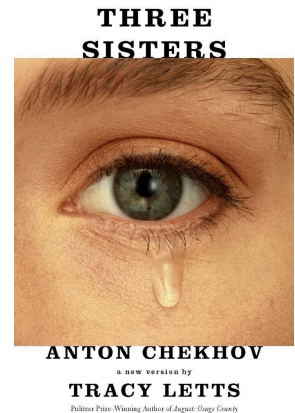
Man From Nebraska (2003)



August: Osage County (2007)



Superior Donuts (2008)



Three Sisters
(Adaptation, 2009)



Mary Page Marlowe (2016)



Linda Vista (2017)

Discussion Questions

Before the Show

- ★ How does the concept of civic responsibility relate to your own life?
What role have you/do you see yourself playing in your local community or government?
- ★ What role do power dynamics play in institutions and in everyday life?
How might *The Minutes* explore these ideas within a local government setting?
- ★ What significance might the small-town setting have in shaping the themes of the play? How might this dynamic reflect broader political or social issues?
- ★ What might the play say about the nature of authority and bureaucracy? How do these themes resonate with current events or your own experiences?
- ★ The title of the play refers to "minutes": records of meetings, events, or decisions. What might the play suggest about how history is recorded and remembered?
- ★ How do you define morality in politics? Do you expect the characters to reflect personal or collective ethics, and how might those differ?
- ★ Do you think the play will challenge your perceptions of the systems that govern us, or do you expect it to confirm things you already believe about politics?

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