

# **FINBOROUGH | THEATRE**

VIBRANT NEW WRITING | UNIQUE REDISCOVERIES  
August-October 2019 Season

**The European Premiere**

# **THE NICETIES**

by Eleanor Burgess.

Directed by Matthew Iliffe. Set and Costume Design by Rachel Stone. Lighting Design by Lucía Sánchez Roldán.  
Presented by Giles Chiplin Productions and 23 Productions in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre.

"You're more afraid of looking like a racist than you are of being a racist.  
Don't you want to think about that?"

The European premiere of the hit Off-Broadway play **The Niceties** by **Eleanor Burgess** opens at the Finborough Theatre for a strictly limited four week season on Tuesday, 1 October 2019 starring double Olivier award winner **Janie Dee** and introducing **Moronke Akinola (Press Nights: Thursday, 3 October 2019 and Tuesday, 8 October 2019 at 7.30pm)**.

At an elite East Coast university, an ambitious young black student and her esteemed white professor meet to discuss a paper the college junior is writing about the American Revolution. They're both liberal. They're both women. They're both brilliant. But very quickly, discussions of grammar and Google turn to race and reputation, and before they know it, they're in dangerous territory neither of them had foreseen – exposing dangerous divides that turn a private debate into a public war.

The Niceties is a complex and compelling depiction of racial and generational divides which speaks directly to our polarised, post-truth era, as it asks who gets to tell the story of America, and how.

Originally premiered at the Huntington Theatre, Boston, before transferring to Manhattan Theatre Club, New York City, The Niceties marks the European debut of a dazzling new American playwright, **Eleanor Burgess**.

Playwright **Eleanor Burgess** has had work produced at Manhattan Theatre Club, McCarter Theatre Center, Huntington Theatre Company, the Alliance Theatre, Merrimack Repertory Theatre, the Contemporary American Theatre Festival, Portland Stage Company, and Centenary Stage, and developed with The New Group, New York Theatre Workshop, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Salt Lake Acting Company, the Lark Play Development Center, and the Kennedy Center/NNPN MFA Playwrights Workshop. She has been a member of Page 73's writers' group Interstate 73 and The Civilians' R&D Group, and the recipient of the Alliance/Keneda National Graduate Playwriting Award, an EST/Sloan commission, a Huntington Playwriting Fellowship, a Keen Teens Commission, and the Susan Glaspell Award for Women Playwrights. She grew up in Brookline, Massachusetts, studied history at Yale College, and recently completed the M.F.A in Dramatic Writing at NYU/Tisch.

Director **Matthew Iliffe** returns to the Finborough Theatre following his acclaimed production of Lionel Bart and Alun Owen's musical Maggie May this spring, and Colleen Murphy's new play Geography of Fire/La Furie et sa Géographie as part of Vibrant 2019 – A Festival of Finborough Playwrights. He previously directed the European premiere of The Burnt Part Boys which was nominated for the OffWestEnd Award for Best Director and Best Musical Production (Park Theatre) and Precious Little Talent (The Albany).

Matthew graduated from the University of Bristol with a first-class honours degree in Theatre and Performance Studies, and trained on the StoneCrabs Young Directors Programme, in association with The Albany. He has served as an assistant director for National Youth Music Theatre and Insane Root Theatre Company.

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[www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk](http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk) Artistic Director Neil McPherson

The cast is:

**Moronke Akinola** plays **Zoe**. She trained at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. Theatre whilst training includes *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, *Wonder Boy*, *The Dissociation of Shirley Mason*, *The Railway Children*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *19th Floor*, *The Flora Sandes*, *Beowulf*, *Philistines*, *A View from the Bridge*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Twelfth Night* and *Lungs*. This is Moronke's professional stage debut.

**Janie Dee** plays **Janine**. Theatre includes *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike* (Ustinov Studio, Bath), *Passion* (Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte), *Follies*, *Women of Troy*, *Johnny on a Spot*, *Carousel* for which she won the Olivier Award for Best Actress in a Musical (National Theatre), *Moonlight*, *Night School* (Harold Pinter Theatre), *Monogamy* (Park Theatre), *Linda* (Manhattan Theatre Club), *Hand to God* (Vaudeville Theatre), *The Seagull*, *Twelfth Night*, *Romeo and Juliet* (Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park), *Ah, Wilderness!* (The Young Vic), *84 Charing Cross Road* (Salisbury Playhouse), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare's Globe International Tour), *Blithe Spirit* (Gielgud Theatre), *Putting it Together* (St. James Theatre), *Hello Dolly!*, *The King and I* (The Curve, Leicester), *NSFW* (Royal Court Theatre), *Noises Off* (The Old Vic and Novello Theatre), *All's Well That Ends Well* (Shakespeare's Globe), *Private Lives* (Nottingham Playhouse), *The Little Hut* (National Tour), *Calendar Girls* (Noël Coward Theatre), *Woman in Mind* (Stephen Joseph Theatre, Scarborough), *Shadowlands* (Wyndham's Theatre), *Mack and Mabel* (Criterion Theatre and National Tour), *Donkey's Years* (Comedy Theatre), *Celebration*, *Old Times* (Gate Theatre, Dublin), *The Apple Cart*, *Old Times*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Design for Living* (Theatre Royal Bath), *Betrayal* (Duchess Theatre and Theatre Royal Bath), *Diva at the Donmar* (Donmar Warehouse), *A Month in the Country*, *Three Sisters* (Chichester Festival Theatre), *My One and Only* (Piccadilly Theatre and Chichester Festival Theatre), *Paradise Moscow* (Opera North), *Comic Potential* for she won the Olivier Award for Best Actress in a Play (Lyric Theatre and Manhattan Theatre Club) and *The Shakespeare Revue* (Royal Shakespeare Company). Film includes *Official Secrets*, *Dare to be Wild*, *Me and Orson Welles*, *The Trouble with Dot and Harry*, *The Driving Seat* and *Celebration*. Television includes *Chimerica*, *Crashing*, *Harold Pinter: A Celebration*, *The Murder Room*, *Death in Holy Orders*, *Midsomer Murders*, *House of Cards*, *Heartbeat* and *London's Burning*.

## The press on *The Niceties* in New York and Boston

"Scintillating...gripping...complexly and entertainingly rendered...a microcosm of a wrenching confrontation occurring on campuses across the country." *The Washington Post*

"The Niceties is a bristling, provocative debate play." *The New York Times*

"Potent...a fair and balanced fight...there are few areas of American life that *The Niceties* doesn't speak to right now." *The LA Times*

"Blisteringly smart, searing and revealing!" *The Boston Globe*

"An articulate, expression of #blacklivesmatter anger as well as a millennial rebel yell." *The Arts Fuse*

"Crackles and spark with friction. Burgess' characters are drawn with precision and her dialogue is expertly crafted to keep both the tension and attention high" *New York Theatre Guide*

## The press on director Matthew Iliffe's production of *Maggie May* at the Finborough Theatre

"Kudos to the dauntless ambition of Matthew Iliffe's chamber production, which grapples with the material in considerable style." *The Times*

"The vim and vigour of Matthew Iliffe's production." *The Guardian*

"Director Matthew Iliffe and his strong cast have put it on the tiny Finborough stage in fine style." *Reviewsgate*

"A thrilling production that fills its small space impressively... Director Matthew Iliffe ensures every aspect of the show is a rediscovered joy" *The Reviews Hub*

"The thrill of Iliffe's production is that it brings this teaming world to vivid life on a tiny pocket studio stage."

*LondonTheatre.co.uk*

"Hugely impressive" *The Upcoming*

"Matthew Iliffe's inventive production... a terrific night out" *Illusions Media*

## The press on director Matthew Iliffe's production of *The Burnt Part Boys*

"It's the imaginative way that the audience is taken on this journey by director Matthew Iliffe that makes this show truly special." *Musical Theatre Review*

"A forward-thinking and meticulous director." *A Younger Theatre*

"This unusual musical is gripping and its staging imaginative... Expertly sung and staged." *The Stage*

"Powerfully told and imaginatively staged." *Stage Review*

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[www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk](http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk) Artistic Director Neil McPherson

# Press Information

**FINBOROUGH | THEATRE**

"One of the finest examples of Off West End musical theatre... The show under Matthew Iliffe's direction, is also staged perfectly." Jonathan Baz

"Staged with heart and craft... one of the best new shows in town." Mark Shenton

The world premiere of *The Niceties* was co-produced in the 2018-2019 season by the Huntington Theatre Company (Peter DuBois, Artistic Director Michael Maso, Managing Director), Boston, MA; Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director Barry Grove, Executive Producer), New York, NY; and McCarter Theatre Center (Emily Mann, Artistic Director/Resident Playwright Michael S. Rosenberg, Managing Director), Princeton, NJ. Originally developed at the Contemporary American Theater Festival in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, in July 2017, under the leadership of Ed Herendeen, Producing Director, and Peggy McKowen, Associate Producing Director. Developed in part at PORTLAND STAGE COMPANY, Anita Stewart, Executive and Artistic Director.

On Twitter at **@NicetiesPlay**

**PRESS NIGHTS: THURSDAY, 3 OCTOBER 2019 AND TUESDAY, 8 OCTOBER 2019 AT 7.30PM  
PHOTOCALL TO BE ANNOUNCED**

Finborough Theatre, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED

Book online at [www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk](http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk)

No booking fees on online, personal or postal bookings

Box Office 01223 357851. (Calls are free. There will be a 5% booking fee.)

Lines are open Monday– Saturday 10.00am–6.00pm

**Tuesday, 1 – Saturday, 26 October 2019.**

**PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGES TO THE PREVIOUSLY ADVERTISED PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE, DUE TO ARTIST AVAILABILITY. WE APOLOGISE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE CAUSED.**

Monday to Saturday evenings at 7.30pm.

Wednesday and Saturday matinees at 3.00pm.

Thursday matinees on 3 October and 24 October at 3.00pm.

**No performances on Sundays, and on Friday 4 October, Saturday, 5 October and Friday, 25 October.**

**Prices until 12 October 2019** – Tickets £18, £16 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £16 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £18 all seats. Previews (1, 2 and 3 October) £14 all seats.

£10 tickets for Under 30s for performances from Tuesday to Thursday of the first week when booked online only.

**Prices from 14 October-19 October 2019** – Tickets £20, £18 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £18 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £20 all seats.

**Prices from 21 October-26 October 2019** – £25, £20 concessions, except Tuesday Evenings £20 all seats, and Saturday evenings £25 all seats.

Performance Length: Approximately two hours with one interval of fifteen minutes.

Group bookings: one free ticket in every 10 tickets booked.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

**Susie Safavi** on email [susie@safavipr.com](mailto:susie@safavipr.com) or **07875 277 913**

or

**Livvy Perrett** on e-mail [press@finboroughtheatre.co.uk](mailto:press@finboroughtheatre.co.uk) or **07889 794858**

Press releases and images available to download at <http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk/press-resources.php>

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