

NORTHLIGHT THEATRE



STUDY GUIDE

This off-beat buddy comedy pairs essential workers from two different worlds in the shared cab of a New York City garbage truck. Danny's a white, blue-collar mansplainer hiding a heart of gold. Marlowe's a Black, Ivy League-educated newbie learning the ropes from her old-school partner. When they're thrown together to pick up what the world has discarded, they discover there's more that binds them than taking out the trash.



[Click here for a full show synopsis!](#)



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Meet the Team



The Playwright: Lindsay Joelle

Lindsay Joelle is a playwright, screenwriter, and librettist originally from Highland Park, Illinois. Joelle is drawn to stories of misfits, rebels, and the unassimilated. Her plays spotlight voices not usually heard in the American theater (like sanitation workers who find treasure in the trash). Her writing explores the rituals, routines, jargon, and humor of communities across America.

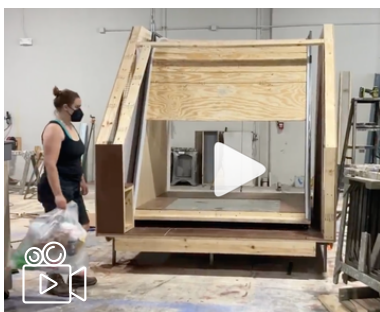
Listen to Lindsay talk about her play in the YouTube video to the left.



The Director: Cody Estle

Cody returns to Northlight Theatre where he previously directed *By the Water* (named by Chicago Sun-Times honorable mention as one of the top theatre productions of 2017) and another seven productions as the assistant director under artistic director, BJ Jones. He is the artistic director of Raven Theatre.

Artists from the show participated in a ride-along with Lakeshore Recycling Systems to learn up close about how trash and recycling are collected in the Chicagoland area. Cody is pictured to the left inside a truck from the ride-along.



The World of the Play

The inspiration for *The Garbologists* came about six years ago when Joelle met a sanitation worker, the husband of a friend, during a weekend getaway. "I found that I had a lot of preconceptions that were just off-target about who's drawn to this career and what the career is like, and also, the personality type that's drawn to this career," she said.

Click the link to the left to see our Scene Shop building the garbage truck!

The Cast



Pictured above is Luigi Sottile as Danny (left) and Tiffany Renee Johnson as Marlowe (right).



Click on the video above to listen to an interview with the actors on the play and their characters,

Background Information

New York's Strongest - The People Behind the Trash



Check out the video to above to learn more about a day in the life as a New York Sanitation worker!



Check out the first scene of the play where Danny tries to show Marlowe the ropes.

Did you know...

- The NYC Department of Sanitation is the world's largest sanitation department.
- DSNY collects more than 10,500 tons of residential garbage and 1,760 tons of recyclables – each day.
- With over 7800 uniformed sanitation workers, in addition to other employees, DSNY is the third largest agency in New York City. In 2020, according to a Business Insider article, only 268 of the uniformed staff members identified as female.
- As of 2019, the department is still predominantly white, reporting approximately 51% of uniformed employees as white, 17.5% as Black, 22% as Hispanic, with smaller percentages of Asian, Hawaiian, Native American, and employees who identified as two or more races or chose not to identify.
- Being a sanitation worker is more dangerous than being a law enforcement officer or fireman. Sanitation work is ranked 6th nationally as the most deadly occupation after hunting/fishing worker, logger, roofer, construction assistant or tender, and aircraft pilot or flight engineer.

Discussion Questions



In an article in Pittsburgh Jewish Chronicle, playwright, Lindsay Joelle says “A theme that defines everything that I write is taking people that seem at first glance very ‘other’ — either to each other or to the audience or both — and then seeing how quickly you can forget that they are ‘other’ and put yourselves in their shoes and feel like you are on this journey with them,” she said. “So by the end, you have an increased awareness and increased empathy.”

Before the show, consider...

- How often do you judge a person based on how they look?
- What assumptions do you make about people at a first glance?

After the show, consider...

- Did the characters of Danny and Marlowe surprise you in any way during the show?
- Think about the characters in the first scene vs the last scene - in what ways did each of them grow?
- How do you feel about the ethics behind mongo-ing?

Activities

One Man's Trash is Another Man's Treasure



1. Write down 3-5 items around your home that you could throw away tomorrow. If you're feeling stuck, think about if you were to take the trash out, what would you find inside the bag?
2. Fold the piece of paper. Your teacher will take all the slips of paper and mix them up in a box. Then, each person will pick a slip of paper that is not their own from the box.
3. Think about the new items you receive. How could these items become your treasure? Combined, or together, how could these items add value to your life? Sketch or write out a pitch (think Shark Tank) for how you might sell these items to someone else. Get creative with your presentation- create a rap, sales pitch, slogan, or catchphrase! Teachers, have a few of your students share how one man's trash may become another man's come up!



Through the efforts of one man with a dream, the Sanitation Department has its own museum-like collection of trash – that has become what he calls a "treasure." Check out the video above!



Watch a scene from the play as Marlowe loads her first truck with garbage and Danny can't help but interfere.

The Tell Me Challenge

In the play, both Marlowe and Danny have preconceived notions and biases about one another's life. Over time, as the two get to know one another, they get rid of these biases and realize they share deeper differences below the surface.

You may have heard of the Tell Me Without Telling Me, also known as #TheTellMeChallenge on social media. It's a trend where people make a video showing something true about themselves, often in a humorous way, without using direct mentions of the subject.

For example, if Danny were playing the game, he would make a video and say "Tell me you're a sanitation worker without telling me you're a sanitation worker" and show an image or action that shows he's a sanitation worker, such as loads of garbage bags behind him or all the belongings he has mongood along the way.

Think of one to three things about yourself that others might not know about you at first glance and/or a bias or preconceived notion someone has about you and what you do for a job, what you study, or your likes/dislikes. Then create a short #TellMeChallenge video and share with the class.