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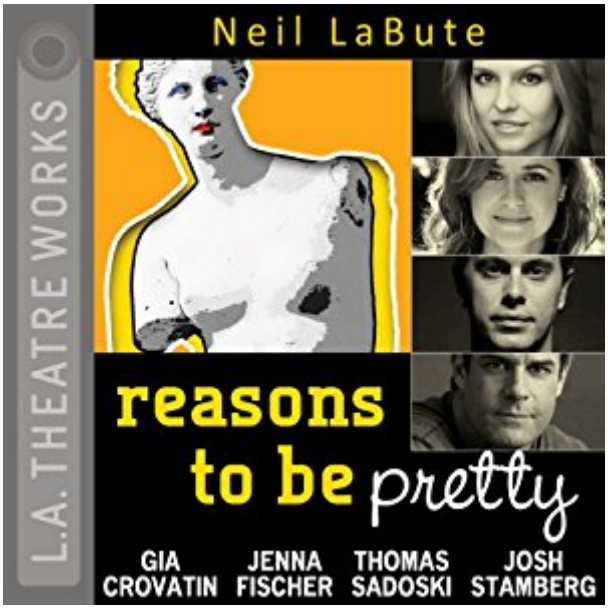
Reasons To Be Pretty



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Synopsis

What does it mean to be pretty? Do you really need someone to validate your appearance? Neil LaBute tackles our obsession with physical beauty head-on in a work nominated for multiple Tony and Drama Desk Awards. Our production, directed by the playwright, includes original Broadway cast member Thomas Sadoski, whose acclaimed performance also earned aTony nomination. Includes a backstage conversation with Neil LaBute and the cast. An L.A. Theatre Works full-cast production featuring Jenna Fischer, Thomas Sadoski, Gia Crovatin, and Josh Stamberg. Written and directed by Neil LaBute. Recorded by L.A. Theatre Works before a live audience.

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Customer Reviews

If you’ve ever read or seen a play by Neil LaBute (or watched one of the filmed adaptations), you can probably anticipate much of the his latest effort, reasons to be pretty. That’s not to say it’s not good or even that it’s by-the-numbers. Quite the contrary, in fact: LaBute is still a master at exploring the dark side of human nature and rocky terrain of the battleground of the sexes. Like the best artists, he proves not only that he has a distinctive voice, but the ability to keep standard hallmarks fresh in spite of their repeated use.reasons to be pretty [sic capitalization] is billed as the last installment of a non-consecutive trilogy that also includes The Shape of Things and Fat Pig. All three plays deal with the preoccupation of physical beauty, judgments made that often go unspoken, and the subtle methods of manipulation used to execute them. The characters are also of similar stock: two men and two women in their mid-twenties to early thirties involved some sort of romantic entanglement. The men are particularly confined to archetypes: the Alpha Male--a rude,

selfish prick with no morals or scruples--and the Beta Male, a self-deprecating nebbish who knows good from evil but is likely to choose evil due to his own weaknesses. The dynamic between the two is endlessly fascinating, as the Beta Male's willingness to, in spite of himself ,give into his baser instincts is often more troubling than the Alpha's more obvious misanthropy.These character molds were best explored in LaBute's first and most well known play: In the Company of Men, in which two middle-management drones plan to seduce and humiliate a deaf woman in retaliation for their own perceived romantic injustices. The set-up in pretty is less caustic but no less dire. Our resident Beta anti-hero Greg works a thankless job packing boxes in a warehouse with his Alpha friend Kent; the narration simply describes the setting as "the outlying suburbs". The play opens mid-fight as Greg's girlfriend Steph finds out that he made an offhand comment to Kent about an attractive new co-worker and, in turn, how she fares in comparison. The quote is never repeated verbatim but we slowly learn that the word "ugly" might have been used, or maybe just "regular." An interesting note on the casting: during the original off-Broadway run, Steph was played by Allison Pill. Only within the contrivances of a play could a young woman like Pill, a petite fresh-faced cherub, be considered anything close to homely, even when compared to some hypothetical uber-babe. But maybe that's the point. Throughout the story, Greg is forced to struggle with the statement's peculiarities--not only what he actually said, but whether he meant it and, ultimately, what it means.Matters are complicated even further by the presence of another babe. Kent's wife Carly, who also works in the warehouse as a security guard. We are first prepared to dislike her, as she lashes out at Greg for his alleged misdeeds without bothering to even hear his side, but in LaBute's world the balance of power is always shifting, as are the audience's sympathies. There are no clear victims or victors here. Through intense, sobering monologues, Carly reveals that her beauty may come at a price, while Steph hints at her own premium on physical attraction.These types of revelations may border on clichÃ©, but LaBute is always able to make well-mined material seem fresh through his fully rendered characters and pitch-perfect dialogue. Like David Mamet, he has an ear for the natural rhythms and cadences of expletive-laden vernacular--less stylized than Mamet, perhaps, but ultimately more real.Fans of LaBute's best works like Men and Shape might expect a shocking third-act change in perception that defined those plays. When it doesn't come, however, the climax is no less satisfying--unlike in, say, the surprisingly toothless Fat Pig. Instead, we are treated to a closing monologue by Greg--the last of four, one for each character--that explicates his struggles and lessons learned in full. The results are a bit didactic, as LaBute usually allows his characters' misogynies, weaknesses and revelations to speak for themselves. But in capping the play in such a straightforward and uncharacteristically gentle manner, he forces his audience to confront their own

standards of beauty as Greg confronts his. The results leave a lasting impression.

The only down side of the Electronic version is that you can't print it, download it to your computer, or email it. This caused problems when I wanted to preform a scene from the play and was not able to make notes or print a copy for the performance.

Great play. Came across it as I was looking for monologues and the title was interesting. Unfortunately, my acting teacher told me the monologues from this play are overdone. Great story though.

I have yet to buy the play, but I've seen it twice on broadway and I'm in love.It is an amazing heartfelt REALISTIC show. It goes over the general theme of Americas obsession with external beauty and goes deeper into the mechanics of our language and how we speak to each other, and what, at times, we are really saying and ultimately how it affects the world around us. It also touches upon everyone individual journey to growing up, some are faster than others, and dealing with our consequences maturely.I've never read or seen any other Neil LaBute play, but not for long.

"Reasons To Be Pretty"--at the outset I must admit that I haven't seen this play which puts me at a disadvantage in evaluating it. It was vying for a Tony in June of 2009, but lost out to "God of Carnage" which is a play with more going for it in terms of merit and overall gravitas (even though "Carnage" is funnier than this one). "Reasons," which closed a weekend after the Tonys when it lost out, is about four ordinary twentyish people: two couples, Greg and Steph who are living together and Kent and Carly who are married. We don't ever see Steph and Carly together, although the other characters interact. During the course of the play each of the four addresses the audience with a long monologue.Greg makes an off-handed remark to his buddy Kent which deeply hurts Steph when Carly reports it to her. He told Kent her face was "regular." Greg and Steph seem like nice people, but Kent is a sleazebag, and we're not too sure about Carly. In his introduction Neil La Bute says, "I've written about a lot of men who are really little boys at heart, but Greg... just might be one of the few adults I've ever tackled." If to him he has portrayed Greg as an adult, I think he should go back to the drawing board because Greg has a long way to go.The remark splits Greg and Steph apart. If you're going through a bad spell in a relationship, you may want to skip this play until you're on your feet emotionally. Greg's real feelings toward Steph are rather difficult to read because he seems to make a U turn that isn't convincingly explained. When Steph gives Greg a list of the things

wrong with him, the play is hilarious. It's hard to build up a great deal of sympathy for any of these people other than Steph, although with actors on stage it might be an entirely different situation.George Carlin would have despised these modern guy's names like Greg and Kent; perhaps it's a satiric thrust on LaBute's part. It's a very accessible play, easy for readers to comprehend and close to the mark in the way relationships work for many readers. We've been there. We can empathize.The play has a lot of humor, deals with breaking-up, infidelity, and the power of the words we use to describe the way people look. I think women will find it has more of a male outlook.

This is one of my favorite Neil LaBute plays. Reasons to be Pretty is the bookend to the three vanity plays of LaBute (The Shape of Things and Fat Pig being the first two).Reasons to be Pretty is a very simple play. This play would be a good suggestion for a school scene study or low budget, full-length performance. Four late twenty-somethings, with minimal sets and props.Please note that copy with the artwork on the cover, is the original version that includes lengthy monologues with each of the characters. The Dramatists' version has the monologues cut out. I believe that is the revised version.

Love this play - did a scene from it for acting class

Love Neil LaBute!!

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