



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

Notes by Sarah dAngelo,
Curtis Zunigha, Eddie Wallace,
Dr. Margaret Bruchac and
Mary Kathryn Nagle

Who's Who

Jane /Le-le-wa'-you

Jane is a present-day Lenape woman and a citizen of the Delaware Nation in Anadarko, Oklahoma. She holds an MBA from Stanford University and works in New York City with a prestigious Wall Street investment bank, Lehman Brothers. **Le-le-wa'-you** is a young Lenape woman living in Manahatta in the 1600s. She is curious about the Dutch newcomers and begins trading with them.

Debra / Toosh-ki-pa-kwis-i

Debra is a present-day Lenape woman and a citizen of the Delaware Nation in Anadarko, Jane's older sister who has moved into the family home to care for their mother, Bobbie. She is grounded in her culture and works to launch a Lenape language program for her community. **Toosh-ki-pa-kwis-i** is a Lenape woman living in Manahatta in the 1600s. She is protective of her younger sister, Le-le-wa'-you, and encourages her to leave Manahatta once the violence brought on by the Dutch threatens to exterminate all Lenape.

Bobbie / Mother

Bobbie is a present-day Lenape elder and a citizen of the Delaware Nation in Anadarko. She is Jane and Debra's mother. She is stubborn to a fault and lives the Lenape way. **Mother** is a Lenape elder living in Manahatta in the 1600s. She is cautious about trading with the Dutch and worries for the future of Manahatta and the Lenape people.

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WORLD PREMIERE

Mary Kathryn Nagle

Directed by Laurie Woolery

Luke / Se-ket-tu-may-qua

Luke is a young Lenape man enrolled in the Delaware Nation in Anadarko. His father, Michael, adopted him when he was very young, after the State came and took him from his grandparents. **Se-ket-tu-may-qua** is a young Lenape man living in Manahatta in the 1600s. He is intelligent and resourceful. He learns to speak with the Dutch and trades fur with them so he can provide for his people.

Dick / Peter Minuit / Peter Stuyvesant

Dick is Jane's boss and CEO of Lehman Brothers. **Peter Minuit** is the director of the Dutch West India Company who "purchased" the island of Manahatta. **Peter Stuyvesant** is the Dutch colonial governor of New Amsterdam who ordered the building of the wall on what is now Wall Street to displace the Lenape from Manahatta.

Joe / Jakob

Joe is the CFO of Lehman Brothers. **Jakob** is a Dutch fur trader in Manahatta in the 1600s. He serves as a liaison between Peter Minuit and the Lenape, and later works for Peter Stuyvesant.

Michael / Jonas Michaelius

Michael is a church choir director and banker in Anadarko. **Jonas Michaelius** is a missionary, sent to Manahatta by the Dutch West India Company to organize a church, who attempts to convert the Lenape to Christianity.

The Story

Manahatta is based on historic events and tells the story of a present-day Lenape woman, her family in Anadarko, Oklahoma and her ancestors living in Manahatta (now called Manhattan), during the 1600s when Peter Minuit, head of the Dutch West India Company, "purchased" the island from the Lenape.

Jane Snake, a Lenape woman from the Delaware Nation, Oklahoma, is a gifted mathematician with an MBA from Stanford University. Six years before the 2008 financial crisis, she relocated to her ancestral homeland of Manahatta to launch her career at the prestigious investment bank Lehman Brothers, on Wall Street.

MATERIALIZING THE MESSAGE IN WAMPUM

Picture a midden of shells, fresh from the feasting, piled near the shore of what is now the north-eastern United States. Dark and light, broken and whole, these are the material remains of the marine creatures whose salty flesh fed the Indigenous people who gathered here. Mingled together are the chitinous exoskeletons of crab and lobster, the calcareous shells of the bivalve mollusks (oysters, mussels, clams) and the spiral-shaped shells of the univalve gastropods (snails, whelks).

This gathering was more than just a meal, however. Important business was conducted here: Weapons were laid aside; peace was negotiated; words were spoken. Minds will remember, but minds are fragile things. Sturdier materials were needed.

And so it is that the hands of Indigenous artisans gathered, from this midden, two kinds of shells: univalve and bivalve, white and purple, whelk and quahog. From the center whorls of the youngest whelk, and from the outer edges of the oldest quahog, beads were painstakingly cut, sanded, drilled, and strung with leather from the tanned hides of deer and fibers from the pith of dogbane. Woven together, water's edge, forest

Jane navigates her identity amid the implications of her job at Lehman Brothers and the tragic history of her Lenape ancestors who once called Manahatta home. Jane's relationship with her sister, Debra, and her mother, Bobbie, in Anadarko becomes strained by the distance and time demands of her job. Bobbie is grounded in the Lenape lifeways and actively resists most mainstream values. Debra's connection to home and serving her community leads her to question her sister's lifestyle and her choices that keep her so far away from home and the family.

Time and place flow seamlessly: The generations of the family emerge into the action of the play as the events of the story unfold. The Lenape ancestors in Manahatta are suffering from the exploits of the Dutch West India Company and its fur trade. Faced with disease, land encroachment, crop destruction and dwindling resources, the Lenape elder (Mother) agrees to trade with the Dutch in exchange for food and unwittingly "sells" Manahatta to Peter Minuit. Her daughter, Le-le-wa'-you, and her companion, Se-ket-tu-may-qua, engage in fur trade with the Dutch for guilders and soon face heavy taxation. Mother's oldest daughter, Toosh-ki-pa-kwis-i encounters Jonas Michaelius, a missionary who attempts to convert the Lenape to Christianity.

Bobbie takes a mortgage loan to cover medical expenses. She quickly becomes unable to keep up with the steep payments and the loan goes into default. During the peak of the financial crisis on Wall Street, Lehman Brothers begins to disintegrate and Jane's family homestead goes into bank foreclosure.

After the "sale" of Manahatta, Peter Stuyvesant is sent by the Dutch West India Company to replace Peter Minuit and handle the "problem" of the Lenape still living in Manahatta. He orders Jakob, a local fur trader and his liaison with the Lenape, to launch a campaign of killing on sight and to use slave labor to build a wall to keep the Lenape out of Manahatta. As the past and present events of *Manahatta* spiral into crisis and collide, all are faced with difficult, life-altering choices. *Manahatta* explores the meaning of family, identity, home and the cost of American capitalism on human lives. —Sarah dAngelo

Lenape: The Original People

From the depths of the great sea, the Creator (Keeshalamukonk) brought forth Turtle (Tahkokx) carrying mud atop its massive shell. The warm sunlight drew the great tree of life from that earth and human life began. Thus "Turtle Island" became the place inhabited by the Lenape, the original people of the land. This sacred gift of life, of language and culture, of tradition and spirit, were honored by the Lenape through ceremony and thanksgiving. The ancestors knew of their relationship with all life and spirit, whether it be the waters, the mountains, the animals or the forests. That's why all of creation was given names of kinship to honor the harmony and balance necessary for sustenance. They lived for countless generations on the bounty of the sea and the bounty of the forests.

The Lenape became known by many Indigenous people as the Ancient Ones and were revered as peaceful elders. Their religious practices endured through the centuries and begat peacemakers and prophets of great oratory skill. They were an inherently caring and benevolent people existing in a matrilineal society of which the women were the backbone.

Then came Shwannock, the pale ones with hairy faces and long knives, sailing in large boats along the river which flows in both directions [now known as the Hudson]. The Lenape cautiously welcomed these strangers to allow them respite on their shores and in their camps. The foreigners had already built a network of trade and commerce with the societies of other Indigenous people, but now they wanted to usurp the Lenapes' economic power by taking their bountiful lands. The Lenape did not know of nor understand the concept of ownership of land and the waterways. These gifts of life from the Creator were for their shared occupancy with all creation. They would soon find out that Shwannock would arrive in boatload after boatload until they became like grains of sand on the shore. Trade and commerce first flourished but soon became forced theft upon the Original People.

The Lenape lived for centuries in many small villages throughout what is now Delaware, Philadelphia, southeastern New York State and most of New Jersey. American history tells of great encounters with the Lenape by great men.



Delaware (Lenape) women: Jennie Bobb and her daughter, Nellie Longhat, Oklahoma, 1915.

William Penn's treaty with the Lenape would give rise to the City of Brotherly Love, Philadelphia. The Dutch established the colony of New Amsterdam on the island known as Manahatta ("the place where they gather wood for bows and arrows"). The English replaced that colony with New York and the governor, Sir Thomas West, Lord de la Warr, named the river valley and its native inhabitants Delaware.

George Washington desired a relationship with the Lenape (now called the Delaware), because of their strategic location during the American Revolution. On September 17, 1778, at Fort Pitt, the new United States used its new authority under its new Constitution to make the first treaty with an Indian nation, the Delaware. The Lenape demonstrated neutrality then alliance with the "Longknives," only to be later betrayed and pushed westward. From Wilmington to West Point, they became refugees in their own homeland.

But the enduring spirit of their ancestors who sprang from the first Tree of Life would sustain them through decades of deprivation and forced migration. As long as they could stand before a sacred fire and pray in their language, they survived. As they traversed the Trail of Broken Treaties, they settled in Ontario, Canada, and in Oklahoma, where they continue to live. Their resilience, tempered by their enduring ancestral spirit, has maintained a continuity of identity as the Original People, which still exists today.
—Curtis Zunigha

Mapping Manahatta

Audiences new to the performance of contemporary Native American plays will find the storytelling style of *Manahatta* refreshingly different from other theatrical genres. This is because Native theatre is its own field of performance. It is broadly described as an embodiment of the practices found in Western European theatre interwoven with the creative expressions of Native ways of being. Given the vast diversity of voices, experiences and traditions found throughout Indian country in the U.S., it is problematic to describe Native plays within a single paradigm. Native theatre is by nature a hybrid artform privileged by the diversity of Native experiences and distinctive Native aesthetics rooted in memory, the oral tradition and performative storytelling.

Collapsing the boundaries of form

While *Manahatta* centers on the Lenape people who celebrate their own cultural practices, beliefs and language apart from other Native nations, the play reveals characteristics and topics that are intertribal in nature and meaningful across the nations. The canon of contemporary Native American plays offers a range of theatrical creative expression and a multiplicity of voices. Yet similar themes and structures often emerge. The themes found in *Manahatta* examine identity, tribal history, the complexities found in traditional and contemporary lifestyles, the tensions between Christianity and traditional practices, intergenerational households, the passing on of traditional knowledge and the presence of native languages.

The interwoven nature of these topics is revealed through the Native understandings of motion, place and time. When enacted within the context of the Native theatre aesthetic, these elements collapse the boundaries of the forms found in traditional Western theatre. A dynamic style of performance occurs that is both theatrical and representative of the way Native epistemology emerges in the aesthetic of all expressive arts. In *Manahatta*, we see the action of the play move episodically through temporal/platial realms similar to the style of the oral tradition and Native storytelling, which mirrors the experience of human memory. The overlap and simultaneous occurrence of time and place

thicket, and open fields materialized the message.

In strings, arm's lengths, or fathoms, these shell beads—called Wampumpeag, or Wampum—encoded and communicated the intentions of those who carried them. Some were used in healing ceremonies and rituals of condolence, or worn as protective adornment. Some were woven into diplomatic collars and belts, and meticulously patterned into paths, rafters, diamonds and other symbols. These patterned wampum objects were assigned specific meanings to recall the significance of that encounter, the history of that tribe, or the intentions of those parties.

For centuries, the Indigenous people of these eastern shores—Lenape, Mohegan, Montauk, Narragansett, Niantic, Shinnecock, Wampanoag, and others—have made wampum beads. They shared these beads with the Haudenosaunee—Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora—who perfected the art and science of wampum diplomacy.

Native people shared their understandings of wampum with strangers from across the ocean—Dutch, English, French and others—who, at

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times, embraced the protocols of wampum diplomacy as an effective means of building alliances. But during the settler colonial era, these strangers also used wampum beads for money, transmuting the shells of these once-living beings into dead agents of commerce. Wampum was strong, but it was vulnerable; when war broke out, even wampum belts would be marked with blood. Yet blood could be washed away by the exchange of good words and good wampum.

And so it is that the hands of Indigenous artisans have always gathered these shells—dark and light, broken and whole, old and young, quahog and whelk, purple and white—in those days, and in these, to weave new wampum.

—Dr. Margaret Bruchac

express exchange with a multiplicity of realms and realities. The interplay between realities and the co-occurrences of temporal and spatial realms is understood and accepted as a natural part of the human experience in Native epistemology.

Tracing Lenape history

Manahatta playwright Mary Kathryn Nagle's research included interviews with Lenape elders who specifically requested the names of their historical leaders be assigned to characters in the play. Ultimately, only one character carries the name of an actual Lenape leader, Se-ket-tu-may-qua. Se-ket-tu-may-qua, however, was not present in *Manahatta* in 1626 when the Dutch "purchased" the island. Se-ket-tu-may-qua was a legendary leader of the Lenape in the mid-19th century when the Delaware Nation was removed from their reservation in Texas and placed where they are today in Anadarko, Oklahoma.

Nagle writes, "To the Delaware Lenape today, Se-ket-tu-may-qua continues to serve as an example of the sort of intelligence, integrity and bravery that comprise the character of the Lenape people." Beginning early in the play's development, the dramaturgical elements of motion, place and time embodied by Se-ket-tu-may-qua brought to life the collective memory of the Lenape people marking different time periods and places in Lenape history.

The rootedness of place

In the staging notes of the play, Nagle states, "*Manahatta* takes place in two time periods, simultaneously. One half of the play takes place in *Manahatta*, in both the 17th and 21st centuries. The other half of the play takes place in modern-day Anadarko. It is important that the two worlds begin separately but immediately commence on a course that ultimately results in a collision."

The places of *Manahatta* and Oklahoma are integral to the story and structure of the play. Both places figure so prominently in the story that one could say they function as actively as the characters themselves. The dynamics of place relates to the Native understanding of the knowledge, experience and meanings held within the very landscape. As Jane navigates the modern-day business world in *Manahatta* at a non-Native investment bank, cultural challenges emerge.

She encounters rhetorical aggressions from her non-Native superiors and colleagues who assume knowledge about her identity and experience growing up Native in Oklahoma. By returning to her ancestral homeland, the power of place drives Jane to navigate and reconcile her Lenape identity. As her ancestral knowledge deepens over the course of the play, her literal and metaphoric belonging in the world deepens.

For Debra and Bobbie, Oklahoma informs their identities shaped by lineage, language, spirituality, history and home. Debra works to build a language preservation program for the Lenape people in the community and does not share Jane's career pursuits beyond Anadarko. Bobbie lives in the home built by her grandparents on the family land, passed through the generations from the allotment days. The homestead is a site of connection, linking Bobbie to her relatives who were relocated to Oklahoma from the Brazos Reserve in Texas in the mid-19th century. Although Bobbie has never physically been to *Manahatta*, she understands the experience one has of ancestral presence in the land. She speaks to Jane about *Manahatta* in the Lenape language and passes on ancestral knowledge about the significant Lenape sites hidden in the present-day *Manahatta* landscape.

Survivance

The linguistic presence of the Lenape language spoken in the play is significant and resonates in real-world terms beyond the theatrical. Most Native languages in the present day are at risk of extinction due to colonial efforts to collapse Native culture and assimilate children as young as five years old through government-mandated residential schools. These schools were established in the late-19th and early-20th centuries and continued to be federally mandated until the passage of the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978. Separating children from their parents and communities has had a devastating impact on all Native cultures, leaving a very small number of fluent speakers in the present day. Native languages contain identity markers and codify cultural nuances and histories that connect Native peoples to place. Bobbie speaks of her experience as a young girl at the Riverside Indian School in Anadarko, and the harsh physical punishment

she and her husband, Charlie, endured there for speaking Lenape. Bobbie asserts her identity and cultural presence by speaking Lenape. The act of speaking Lenape intrinsically creates a material rootedness and reciprocal relationship to Manahatta through motion, place and time.

Spoken Native language, affirmation of identity and connection to place are enactments of what Anishinaabe cultural theorist Gerald Vizenor refers to as *Survivance*: the act of resisting the Native stereotype of a “vanishing race” with a sense of Native presence over absence, nihilism and victimry. Manahatta and Oklahoma are integral to subverting colonial mindsets through language, identity and ancestral connection as the characters move between and within each place as the events of the story unfold.

Memory

Nagle also states in her staging notes, “The cast consists of seven actors total. Each actor must play the characters as they are outlined. The double/triple casting is not optional.” The double and triple casting enacts motion through the characters who transform intergenerationally, from place to place, and from one time period to another. The world of the play expands through the compression of the characters. Each one actively moves into embodied enactments of ancestral coexistence and expressing a connection to place and the cyclical nature of time. In moments, the characters generationally intersect across the centuries. The characters Jane / Le-le-wa'-you, Debra / Toosh-ki-pa-kwis-i, Luke / Se-ket-tu-may-qua, and Bobbie / Mother become one and the same as they move through and between their ancestral bloodlines.

The nature of this staging further articulates the Native understanding of ancestral coexistence, blood memory and identity, all of which are rooted in motion, place and time. Ancestral coexistence and blood memory refer to the way ancestral stories and events remain within an individual as inherited, somatic information encoded and passed through the generations. Nagle's stated casting and staging requirements of merging place, characters and time periods structures dramatic meaning and conveys the fluid motion between temporal and platial realms.

A meta-theatrical creation story

During its early development, the performance history of *Manahatta* is a meta-theatrical creation story, also informed by motion, place and time. The play was developed during Nagle's 2012–2013 residency with The Public Theater's Emerging Writers Group in New York City. It was presented as a featured staged reading during the Oklahoma City Theatre Company's 4th annual Native American New Play Festival, April 20, 2013. The play was presented in New York City as a reading on May 22, 2013, during the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous People. It also received a reading later that year as a part of The Public's New Work Now series co-presented by New York City-based Native theatre company The Eagle Project on September 14, 2013. The Oklahoma City Theatre Company's 5th annual Native American New Play Festival selected *Manahatta* as the featured festival production, and performances ran May 8–17, 2014. The Public Theater workshopped *Manahatta* during its inaugural Public Studio series, where the play opened May 15, 2014. The workshop production at The Public Theater opened with a prayer in Lenape from the Delaware Tribe's Tribal Operations Manager and former Chief, Curtis Zunigha.

In December 2014, *Manahatta* was named a top-three finalist for the 2014 William Saroyan Prize for Playwriting, and was named the runner-up for the 2015 Jane Chambers Playwriting Award. *Manahatta* is also on the 2015 Kilroy's List and has been read in college and university classes around the country.

Tribalography

Based on historic events, *Manahatta* represents the Lenape voice as each of the characters engages with non-Natives in a living intersection of motion, place and time. *Manahatta* invites audiences to transform into a community bearing witness in the tradition of Native storytelling to re-vision the Lenape narrative and how Manahatta came to be. Choctaw writer and literary theorist LeAnne Howe's notion of Tribalography resonates in the interwoven construction of this cross-cultural exchange. According to Howe, “Tribalography is a story that links Indians and non-Indians,” which gives a fuller version of individual and tribal identities. *Manahatta* dramatically presents the

FROM TULIPS TO HOUSES

In 1637, the “tulip bubble” burst, sending the Dutch economy into a tailspin. Prior to 1637, the value of prized tulip bulbs skyrocketed as investors began to pay more and more guilders—the Dutch currency at the time—for a single tulip bulb. At the mania's peak in February 1637, single tulip bulbs sold for more than 10 times the annual income of a skilled craftworker.

Some 371 years later, in 2008, the “housing bubble” burst, sending both the American and world economies into a tailspin. Before 2008, the value of homes skyrocketed as investors continued to pour money into residential mortgage-backed securities—a financial instrument Wall Street created to sustain, briefly, a market for the mortgage loans necessary to support an inflated housing bubble. At the peak of the bubble, in 2007, hundreds of mortgage companies were making mortgage loans to millions of Americans to purchase homes at prices many times the annual income of a skilled craftworker.

What happened in 2008 isn't complicated. It's repetitive of what came before. Perhaps this time we can take action to ensure it won't happen again.
—M. K. N.

MARY KATHRYN NAGLE

Mary Kathryn Nagle is a partner at Pipestem Law and an award-winning playwright. She is a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and an honorary member of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska.

Prior readings of *Manahatta* took place at The Public Theater's New Work Now series and at the 2013 United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous People. The play was a finalist for the 2014 William Saroyan Prize for Playwriting. Nagle's new play *Sovereignty* will premiere at Arena Stage in January 2018. Her other plays include *Miss Lead*, *Fairly Traceable*, *In My Father's Eyes*, *Sliver of a Full Moon*, *Diamonds . . . Are a Boy's Best Friend*, *Katrina Stories*, *Welcome to Chalmette*, *To the 7th Degree* and *Waaxe's Law*.

Nagle graduated summa cum laude from Tulane Law School. Her law review articles have been published in five different journals, including the *Tulane Law Review* and *Tulsa Law Review*. She is a frequent speaker at law schools and symposia on issues related to restoration of tribal sovereignty, tribal self-determination, Indian civil and constitutional rights, and safety of Native women.
—Eddie Wallace

interconnected nature of the aesthetic manifestations that distinguish Native American plays from other styles of theatre performance. —S. D.

Writing Plays to Change Laws

People often ask me “When will you stop being a lawyer and just be a playwright?” My answer: Never. I am a storyteller, but the stories I tell are the ones that U.S. law, for many years, sought to silence. Our inability to tell our stories—until now—has ensured the survival of laws designed to take our lands, our dignity and ultimately, our sovereignty. But we are still here. To change the law, we must tell our stories.

As a lawyer, I know that the near erasure of Tribal Nations wouldn't have been possible without the law. The law made genocide possible; for example, The Indian Removal Act (IRA) of 1831, or the Supreme Court's 1823 decision in *Johnson v. M'Intosh*, wherein the Court declared that Tribal Nations could no longer claim legal title to their land because “[t]o leave [Tribal Nations] in possession of their country, was to leave the country a wilderness,” and as a result, colonial “[c]onquest gives a title [to the Conqueror] which the Courts of the conqueror cannot deny.”

As a storyteller, I know these laws wouldn't have been possible without a narrative to support them. Just as blackface was created in the 19th century to support the legalization of the institution of slavery, redface (the portrayal of Indigenous people by non-Native actors and playwrights) was concurrently created to support the taking of Indian lands and lives. It's no coincidence that redface became increasingly popular before, and after, the passage of the IRA in 1831.

More than 180 years later, the IRA has never been declared unconstitutional, nor has the Supreme Court overturned its decision in *Johnson*. And the same redface performances that made the IRA possible in 1831 continue on American stages today. But something is different. Major theatres are beginning to produce Native stories—plays by Native playwrights.

As a lawyer, I know the telling of Native stories will counter—and ultimately change—the dehumanizing narrative that made the legal framework of genocide possible. As a lawyer and



Playwright Mary Kathryn Nagle

a direct descendant of a survivor of genocide, I've committed my life's work to eradicating the harmful stereotypes and false stories this nation created to justify the “legal” extermination of my people. So no, I will never just be a “playwright.” I will always be a lawyer who writes plays to change the laws that sought to strip my Nation of its sovereignty and right to exist. —M. K. N.

Further Reading

- Hanay Geiogamah and Jaye T. Darby eds. *American Indian Theater in Performance: A Reader*. The first comprehensive collection to present the views of leading playwrights, directors, scholars and educators in contemporary Native theatre.
- Birgit Däwes, ed. *Indigenous North American Drama: A Multivocal History*. This collection traces the historical dimensions of Native North American drama through overviews of major developments, individual playwrights' perspectives and in-depth critical analyses.
- S. E. Wilmer, ed. *Native American Performance and Representation*. This volume provides a wider and more comprehensive study of Native performance, not only its past but also its present and future. Contributors use multiple perspectives to look at the varying nature of Native performance strategies. —S. D.