

I've always been drawn to characters who are messy - who don't have it figured out. When I was invited to submit proposals for the Marymount Manhattan season back in Spring of 2025, I kept coming back to *Marie Antoinette* by David Adjmi. Pedagogically, it was the perfect piece to support the Theatre Arts Department's students-in-training in all concentrations. For me, and my gravitation toward the messy, Adjmi doesn't give us Marie Antoinette as a distant historical icon covered in cobwebs. He gives us a person. She is eerily recognizable beneath the tulle, jewels, and hair.

In the play, Marie is not solely a symbol of excess, privilege, detachment. She's not *frozen* in history. She's *active*, impulsive, curious, and trying (often unsuccessfully) to understand the world she's been dropped into.

Early in life she is thrown into a system with rules that no one explains to her, relations that no one modeled, and lessons that she never sought out for herself. Because of this, her mistakes grow. Some could have been avoided but all are rooted in how little she tries to understand the world around her early on.

This gap in understanding is what makes her tale universal. In this production, embodied by three Maries, we are challenged to ask ourselves what makes her like us. Amidst our Maries' journey we ask ourselves; How often do we all move through the world without really questioning the systems we benefit from? How often do we avoid asking challenging questions because it's more comfortable not to? Who am I to take *it all* on?

The tragedy in this dark comedy is not only that Marie misunderstood her world, it's that she realizes too late that she needed to understand it in the first place.

This play is about the moment when awareness strikes. When it is no longer possible to look away. It asks what it costs us to wait, and what happens when understanding and empathy are delayed until there's no other choice.

Join us as we live in the space between not knowing and *choosing* not to know. *Marie Antoinette* reminds us that awareness isn't passive but instead something we're responsible for.

Enjoy.

-Matthew Mastromatteo