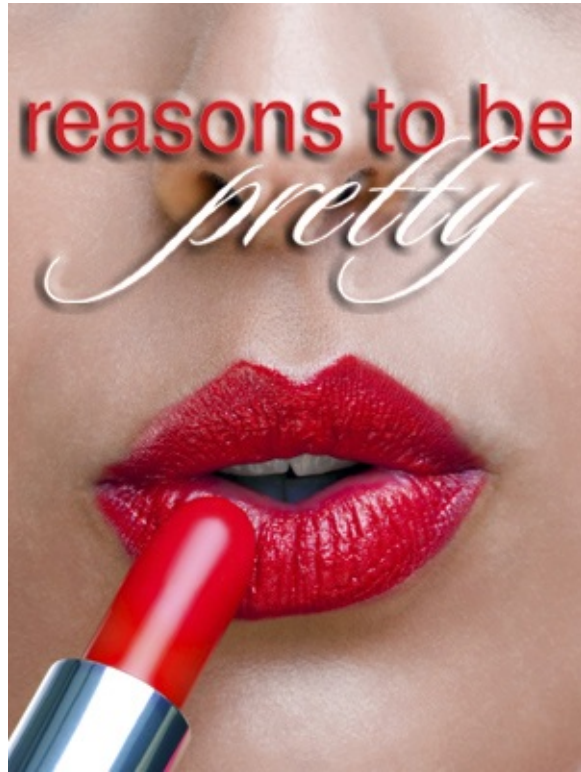


Neil LaBute



"It's never easy to say what you mean, or to know what you mean to begin with. With a delicacy that belies its crude vocabulary, *Reasons to be Pretty* celebrates the everyday heroism in the struggle to find out." --Ben Brantley, *New York Times*

A Playgoer's Companion

About the Playwright

Neil LaBute was born in Detroit, Michigan. He studied theatre at Brigham Young University, where he joined the Mormon Church. He produced a number of plays that pushed the envelope of what was



acceptable at the conservative religious university, some of which were shut down after their premieres. However, he also was honored as one of the "most promising undergraduate playwrights" at the BYU theater department's annual awards. LaBute also did graduate work at the University of Kansas, New York University, and the Royal Academy of London. In 1993, he returned to Brigham Young University to premiere his play *In the Company of Men*, for which he received an award from the Association for Mormon Letters. He taught drama and film at IU-Purdue in Fort Wayne, Indiana in the early 1990s where he adapted and filmed the play, which was shot over two weeks and cost \$25, 000 beginning his career as a film director. The film went on to win numerous nominations and awards.

LaBute has received high praise from critics for his unsettling portrayals of human behaviour. In *In the Company of Men*, he portrays two misogynist businessmen cruelly plotting to romance and emotionally destroy a deaf woman. His 2002 play *The Mercy Seat* is set on Sept. 12th, 2011 and concerns a man who worked at the World Trade Center but was away from the office during the attack with his mistress. Expecting that his family believes that he was killed in the towers' collapse, he contemplates using the tragedy to run away and start a new life with his lover.

LaBute's style is very language-oriented. His work is terse, rhythmic, and highly colloquial, bearing much similarity to one of his favourite playwrights, David Mamet. [adapted from wikipedia]

About the Play

Reasons to be Pretty is Neil LaBute's first play to be staged on Broadway. Following *The Shape of Things* and *Fat Pig*, it is the final installment of a trilogy that focuses on modern day obsession with physical appearance.

The play premiered at the off-Broadway Lucille Lortel Theater in Greenwich Village on June 2, 2008 and ran through July 5. The Broadway show began previews at the Lyceum Theatre on March 13, 2009, and opened on April 2, 2009, closing on June 14 after 85 performances. It was nominated for three Tony awards (best play, best actor, best actress) and three Drama Desk Awards.

In 2011 it was successfully revived in London at the Almeida Theatre with a cast including award winning UK actress Billie Piper. It opened to critical acclaim on the press night, 17th of November 2011. *Reasons to be Pretty's* Australian Premiere is scheduled for May 2012 at the Darlinghurst Theatre in Sydney. [adapted from the *Internet Broadway Database* and wikipedia]

Synopsis

Reasons To Be Pretty confronts America's obsession with physical beauty headlong. In this exhilarating new play, Greg's tight-knit social circle is thrown into turmoil when his off-handed remarks about a female co-worker's pretty face (and his girlfriend's lack thereof) get back to said girlfriend. But that's just the beginning. Greg's best buddy Kent, and Kent's wife Carly also enter into the picture and the emotional equations becomes exponentially more complicated. As their relationship crumbles, their friends are pulled into the fray and all are forced to confront a sea of deceit, infidelity and betrayed trust in their journey to answer that oh-so-American question: How much is pretty worth? [adapted from *Broadway's Best Shows*]

What Others Thought.

"This isn't just another dark-hued portrait of people who use people . . . after this first burst of shouting Mr. LaBute lowers the volume and asks us to listen carefully to the way people speak in the early 21st century and to acknowledge the reflexive, culturally conditioned cruelty in much of what we say. This is not a hardship, since Mr. LaBute is writing some of the freshest and most illuminating American dialogue to be heard anywhere these days." – Ben Brantley, *New York Times*

"While it's brutally entertaining, the highly physical opening scene is a little too peppered with clever dialogue and glib side references to be entirely naturalistic in such a moment of sustained rage. But beneath LaBute's manicured exchange of abuse and excuses, he hits on a penetrating truth about how an ill-chosen word or two can undermine or even destroy a relationship. The playwright is at his abrasive best in seeding sympathy for Greg even though he's the one who was out of line, while painting volatile Steph as harsh and unyielding." – David Rooney, *Variety*

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