



# NEW WORKS FESTIVAL

## *Disappearing Act*

*By Lena Ford*

*Directed by Sabina Ptasznik*

YEAR



002

4.18 – 4.20

MASSMAN THEATRE

USC School  
of Dramatic Arts

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**  
**(In Order of Appearance)**

Grace.....	Courtney Berck
Millie.....	Gabriela Ortega
Mommy.....	Alyssa Finney
Daddy.....	Michael Bernardi
Teddy.....	Sedale Threatt
Young man.....	Ben Gail
Ms. Wilson & Mrs. Daniels.....	Kyla Sylvers
Counter Lady & Mrs. Harper.....	Hannah Leventhal

**TIME**

1945

**PLACE**

Sugar Hill Harlem & other NYC Boroughs

There will be no intermission.

**PRODUCTION STAFF**

Scenic Design.....	Daniel Choi
Costume Design.....	Jiwon Shin
Lighting Design.....	Emily Levin
Sound Design.....	Noelle Hoffman
Stage Manager.....	Angela Mak
Dramaturg.....	Tracey Leigh
Scenic Design Mentor.....	Tom Buderwitz
Costume Design Mentor.....	Tina Haatainen-Jones
Lighting Design Mentor.....	Leigh Allen
Crew.....	Delancey Dessaints-Prince Alec Fisher Holly Hubsher Liam Sterbinsky Katie Yaru

**PLAYWRIGHT'S BIO**

Lena Ford is a second-year graduate student at USC's MFA Dramatic Writing Program. She was born in New York and lived in Los Angeles for more than 25 years, returning after residing in Sydney, Australia, for five years. She writes extensively on social issues and their effects on families and the community. Her current play, *Disappearing Act*, takes a bird's eye view at the insidiousness of racism and its impact on a mixed-raced Black teenager in 1945 Harlem who decides to pass as White.

**PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE**

This play, although, not factual, is based on stories shared by my mother who grew up in Sugar Hill in the 1940s as a fair-skinned Black person during a time of brutal racism. Her first-hand experience of race riots at school, sitting on the back of the bus and being denied lunch counter service — all the while clarifying her Black identity to Whites brought up questions of identity for me. What if my mother hadn't identified as Black? And how many others like her simply disappeared into the fabric of America leaving behind no trace of their Black heritage?

## DIRECTOR'S BIO

Sabina Ptasznik (Director) is the Co-Artistic Director of The Vagrancy, which is her artistic home in L.A. She is the founder of TACTICAL READS with the Los Angeles Female Playwrights' Initiative. Recent credits: *Bottom of the World* by Lucy Thurber (The Vagrancy), *Morning View* by Jesse Mu-En Shao (USC), *The Woodsman* (Theatre Unleashed), *PTSD* (Theatre of NOTE), *Our Town* (The Sierra Madre Playhouse). Other fun credits: *The Twentieth-Century Way* (assistant director, Theatre @ Boston Court), *Tree* (assistant director, EST-LA); NY: *Far Away* by Caryl Churchill (59E59 Street Theater), *Gravity* by Rachel White (American Globe Theatre Turnip Festival). Education: The New School for Drama (MFA in Directing). [www.sabinaptasznik.com](http://www.sabinaptasznik.com)

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We leave our families behind constantly. This struggle is not alien to us as Americans, who are expected to flee the nest as soon as we graduate from high school in the pursuit of a “better life,” going to a college half-way across the country. This is the most basic version of this struggle, and in its simplicity lays its universal appeal.

Lena Ford's *Disappearing Act* is the story of a girl who broaches this struggle in the 1940s because her life is defined by the color of her skin – she can pass as white, and wonders what her life might be like as she misses the presence of her white-looking father. In this story, we are faced with a situation in which racial identity separates families, and in it are forced to think about what it is really that causes us to give up what is most important to us in the search for a “better life.” Who defines this for us and why do we really deem it so significant? What is the crux of this decision?

Whether it is a matter of going to college, immigration or racism, Ford tackles a theme that wants us to get underneath its skin. I hope you will join us in the talkback that follows this workshop production to reflect on how our story rings true to you and what questions are still to be answered.

Thank you.

