

Welcome to this introduction to 'A GOOD HOUSE by Amy Jephta directed by Nancy Medina.

The audio-described performance at the Royal Court Theatre is on Saturday the 8th of February. There is a touch tour at 12pm, the introductory notes will start in the auditorium at 1:15, and the performance at 1:30pm. The performance runs for approximately 1 hour and 50 minutes without interval and the live audio description will be given by Miranda Yates and Eleanor Margolies.

Information on the Royal Court's website tells us... ***'In the quaint suburban community of Stillwater, a mysterious shack springs up from the dust with the inhabitants nowhere to be seen. As speculation abounds, new residents Sihle and Bonolo are recruited by their neighbourhood to be the face of a campaign to demolish the shack in this biting satire of community politics.'***

Please note - this production contains racial discrimination, classism and references to dispossession.

The play is set in a fictional aspirational suburb in South Africa known as Stillwater on an upscale gated housing development.

There are six characters. We first meet **Sihle**. He's a black *South African man of Zulu heritage* in his mid-thirties, with a bald head that he sometimes strokes reflectively. He has a small goatee beard and a dazzling smile. He's tall and athletic, physically relaxed, and often stands with his hands in his pockets. For an informal gathering at home, he wears a navy button-down shirt and matching trousers, and a teal-coloured tie with subtle horizontal stripes. His shoes are of light brown leather, in a woven texture, and he has a chunky gold watch. At an informal daytime gathering, he wears a bright emerald Lacoste polo shirt and grey slacks and white Lacoste trainers with a stainless-steel sports watch. At certain moments, Sihle speaks his first language, isiZulu.

His wife is **Bonolo**. She is a black South African woman in her early thirties with a smooth oval face and golden-brown skin, and waist length black braids. She's tall and curvy, and takes up space confidently, gliding around her home with pride.

Bonolo first appears in a dramatic fuchsia pink two piece with a matching ankle length gauzy kaftan swirling over it. Her feet are bare. She later changes into a black silk kimono style gown with a white floral print, over black leggings. At a daytime gathering she wears a white scoop neck tee shirt over wide-legged electric blue trousers with white trainers.

Their neighbours are Chris and Lynette. **Chris** is a white South African man in his mid-forties. He has slightly messy mid-brown hair brushed back from his face and curling up at the collar, and a beard with a few grey hairs. He wears a white shirt with a grid pattern, open at the collar, tucked into khaki chinos, worn with dress shoes. Chris has an assertive stance, leading from his hips, and asserting his ownership of every space he walks into, but often checks his phone surreptitiously during social gatherings.

Lynette is a white South African woman in her forties, petite in build. She has a square face with tumbling blonde curls that she sometimes wears in a carefully contrived messy up do, with strands falling at the sides of her face. She first wears a pale grey silk blouse untucked over tight blue jeans with rolled up cuffs and high-heeled wedged sandals. She later wears a similar outfit with a tailored white shirt over black trousers and white slip-on shoes, and finally a pale blue summer dress with a full skirt.

We later meet another couple Jess and Andrew. **Jess** is a white South African in her early thirties, with pale skin and shoulder length brown hair. Two strands are gathered behind her head in a small bunch, and she wears a thin gold chain and wedding and engagement rings. Jess is a yoga teacher and first appears in workout kit: a sage green crop top and leggings that show off her slim, muscled body. Later in the play she wears red and white checked dungarees. Among her teaching props, she has a small brass 'singing bowl' that she can set ringing with a small mallet to produce a supposedly calming tone.

Andrew is a white South African man in his thirties. He has brown hair cut into a contemporary mullet style and is clean shaven, with an earring on his left ear. Throughout, he wears blue jeans with white t-shirts – at first a sloppy tee with a cartoon design, and later a smarter, plain white tee. He has a slightly vague manner, that sometimes comes into focus with anxiety and frenetic movement.

The play takes us to the homes of two of these couples, with the actors involved in changing the set and furnishings in full view of the audience.

The stage is open to us as an empty black box about 12 metres wide and deep. A 6-metre square in the centre is marked out along its edges by two lines of white neon light, the lines about 30 centimetres apart. The area within the neon lines frames the main living space in the homes visited. Just behind the square frame at the back of the space hanging about 4 metres above the floor are two black metal bars which run all the way across. The bars can rise or lower as needed and are used to hang various panels and paintings from, indicating two different home interiors.

We begin in the newly acquired home of affluent couple Sihle and Bonolo, the choice of décor and furnishings evoke a sense of tasteful refinement. At the back 2 grey wall panels glide in, one at either end of the space. Each is about a metre and a half wide and 4 metres in height, and rests just above the floor. Just in front of each panel are three flat woven baskets hanging one above the other, the baskets decrease in size with the largest on the top at about 50cms wide – they appear golden in the light. The space in between the panels is taken up by 2 large paintings of similar dimensions in the style of stylised African masks, the painting on the left is in tones of green, cream, black and dark grey, with the painting on the right having the additional tone of warm orange.

Just in front of the panels to the left of centre is a luxury grey-toned wet bar that can be wheeled into a room for serving drinks, with two glass fronted cabinets, one a temperature-controlled wine rack and the other housing an array of wine glasses illuminated by an integrated light. There's a small sink in the centre of the dark speckled marble countertop, with an expensive-looking bottle of whisky and glass tumblers at the left end, and a bottle of red on the right. To the right of the bar is a neat designer chair with a cream cushioned seat and woven rope detailing at the sides.

Forward of the cabinet on the right and left, with their backs to the edges of the space, two matching sofas face each other. The sofas have a pale wooden frame and deep cushioned seats and backs, upholstered in a soft pale grey fabric. Each sofa has 2 large cream cushions with a tasteful bold pattern on one side. Towards us

in front of the sofa on the left is a small wooden coffee in the same pale wood tone, and in front of the sofa opposite is a stylish rust orange bean bag.

A large rug in the centre of the room, tones with the paintings at the back, and has another larger coffee table similar in style to the one on the left but with a rattan style top and twisted legs.

Later we move to the more modest home of Andrew and Jess. The paintings and baskets rise out of view, leaving just the pale grey wall panels. These can be pushed together in the centre like shutters over a window, obscuring the view behind. Initially the panels are to the sides revealing the view outside which looks onto a small shack, an improvised abode built from sections of board, an old doorframe and a makeshift window with plastic sheeting poking out from under a low-pitched roofline. As events unfold the shack extends as other elements are added to it, for example a satellite dish.

Unlike Sihle and Bonolo's place the interior of Jess and Andrews home is sparsely furnished, the two pale grey sofas are in the same position but there's no decoration on the walls. The large sofa cushions have been turned around to reveal plain reverse sides. The only addition is a large woven basket that Jess brings in containing small, rolled towels used in her yoga teaching.

Cast and Production Credits

Sihle is played by **Sifiso Mazibuko**

Bonolo is played by **Mimi M Khayisa**

Chris is played by **Scott Sparrow**

Lynette is played by **Olivia Darnley**

Jess is played by **Robyn Rainsford**

Andrew is played by **Kai Luke Brummer**

The Designer is **ULTZ**

The Assistant Designer is **Shaquelle Devroux**

The Lighting Designer is **Chris Davey**

The Sound Designer is **Elena Pena**

The Composer is **Femi Temowo**

The Voice and Dialect coach is **Hazel Holder**

The Writer is **Amy Jephta**

The Associate Director is **Tatenda Shamiso**

and the Director is **Nancy Medina**

This is the end of the introduction to ***A GOOD HOUSE*** at the Royal Court Theatre. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please contact the box office on 020 7565 5000.