

# **Humana Festival 2007**

## The Complete Plays

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# **STRIKE-SLIP**

## **by Naomi Iizuka**

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## BIOGRAPHY

Naomi Iizuka's plays include *Anon(ymous)*; *At the Vanishing Point* (2005 Humana Festival); *36 Views*; *Language of Angels*; *Polaroid Stories* (1997 Humana Festival); *War of the Worlds* (2000 Humana Festival, co-written with Anne Bogart and SITI Company); *Aloha, Say the Pretty Girls* (1999 Humana Festival); *Tattoo Girl*; and *Skin*. Her plays have been produced at Actors Theatre, The Children's Theatre Company, The Kennedy Center, Huntington Theatre Company, Portland Center Stage, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, The Public Theater, Geva Theatre Center, Campo Santo, CalShakes and Brooklyn Academy of Music; workshopped at Mark Taper Forum, Geva Theatre Center, Sundance Theatre and The Playwrights' Center's PlayLabs Festival; and published by Playscripts, Inc., Dramatic Publishing and Overlook Press. Ms. Iizuka is a member of New Dramatists and the recipient of an Alpert Award, Whiting Award, Stavis Award, PEN Center/USA West Award for Drama, Rockefeller MAP grant, NEA/TCG Artist-in-Residence grant, McKnight Fellowship and Princeton's Hodder Fellowship.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Strike-Slip* premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2007. It was directed by Chay Yew with the following cast and staff:

LEE SUNG CHO ..... Nelson Mashita  
FRANK RICHMOND..... Keith Randolph Smith  
RAFAEL GUTTIEREZ ..... Justin Huen  
ANGIE LEE ..... Ali Ahn  
VIVIANA RAMOS..... Romi Dias  
RACHEL MORSE ..... Heather Lea Anderson  
DAN MORSE ..... Tim Altmeyer  
VINCE LEE ..... Hanson Tse

Scenic Designer ..... Paul Owen  
Costume Designer..... Christal Weatherly  
Lighting Designer..... Deb Sullivan  
Sound Designer ..... Andre Pluess  
Properties Designer ..... Ron Riall  
Fight Director ..... Lee Look  
Stage Manager.....Debra Anne Gasper  
Production Assistant..... Melissa Miller  
Dramaturg ..... Julie Felise Dubiner  
Assistant Dramaturg ..... Cara Pacifico  
Casting..... Judy Bowman Casting  
Directing Assistant..... Amanda Boekelheide

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(In order of appearance:)*

LEE SUNG CHO, Korean, fifties, born and raised in Korea, owner of a small market in downtown Los Angeles

FRANK RICHMOND, African-American man in his forties

RAFAEL GUTTIEREZ, Mexican-American, seventeen years old, second generation American, born and raised in Los Angeles

ANGIE LEE, Korean-American, seventeen years old, first generation American, born and raised in Los Angeles

VIVIANA RAMOS, Mexican-American, late thirties, first generation American, born and raised in Los Angeles, a real estate agent

RACHEL MORSE, Caucasian, late thirties, a creative writing teacher

DAN MORSE, Caucasian, late thirties, a seismic analyst and associate professor at Cal Tech

VINCE LEE, Korean-American, early twenties, first generation American, born and raised in Los Angeles

## **PLACE**

Los Angeles.

## **TIME**

Act 1 takes place now over a 24-hour period.

Act 2 takes place over a 24-hour period one year later.

“An earthquake of consequence is never an isolated event.”

—Charles Richter, *Elementary Seismology*

# STRIKE-SLIP

## ACT I Scene 1

*Mid-morning. A market in downtown Los Angeles. LEE SUNG CHO is behind the counter watching a Korean language drama on a tiny television. FRANK RICHMOND enters.*

**RICHMOND.** Hey.

*(Pause.)*

Hey. A pack of Marlboro Lights.

*(LEE retrieves a pack of cigarettes.)*

I said lights.

*(LEE retrieves another pack.)*

No not that one. I want the box.

*(LEE retrieves another pack.)*

No. Box.

**LEE.** No more.

**RICHMOND.** Say again.

**LEE.** No more. Out.

**RICHMOND.** All right just give me that one then. And give me six quick picks.

*(LEE retrieves the tickets.)*

Anybody ever win around here? Anybody ever strike it rich?

*(LEE doesn't respond.)*

I asked you a question.

*(LEE rings up the cigarettes and the scratchers.)*

**LEE.** Ten sixty-three.

*(RICHMOND gives LEE money. LEE gives back change.)*

**RICHMOND.** I gave you a ten and a five.

**LEE.** Ten and a one.

**RICHMOND.** Man you can't count. I gave you a ten and a five.

**LEE.** You gave me one.

**RICHMOND.** That's a lie.

**LEE.** I not lie.

**RICHMOND.** Man, what do you think, I'm stupid?

**LEE.** You gave me a ten and a one.

**RICHMOND.** That's bullshit.

**LEE.** Not bullshit.

**RICHMOND.** What did you say to me?

**LEE.** Here, take.

(LEE SUNG CHO *pushes the money back at RICHMOND.*)

**RICHMOND.** Don't fuckin throw money at me.

**LEE.** I want you get out.

**RICHMOND.** I ain't gonna say it but one more time. I gave you a ten and a five. You owe me.

**LEE.** Not five. One.

**RICHMOND.** What do you think I am? You think you can just stand there and lie to my face? Who do you think you're dealing with?

**LEE.** Get out of my store.

**RICHMOND.** What do you think I am?

**LEE.** Get out.

(LEE SUNG CHO *retrieves a gun.*)

**RICHMOND.** I'll be back.

(RICHMOND *takes back his change and goes.* LEE *puts down the gun.*)

## Scene 2

*Morning. A bus stop in downtown Los Angeles. The sound of street vendors, transistor radio music, and traffic like the ocean. RAFAEL GUTTIEREZ has his hands over ANGIE LEE's eyes.*

**RAFAEL.** What do you see?

**ANGIE.** Tiny dots, hundreds of them, thousands even. And they're moving, they're like moving in different directions. And they're all different colors all at once: red and orange. Yellow and green. Blue. Chartreuse.

**RAFAEL.** Chartreuse?

**ANGIE.** What?

**RAFAEL.** Where do you get a word like that?

**ANGIE.** I don't know. It's just a word.

(ANGIE *pushes RAFAEL'S hands away.*)

**RAFAEL.** Chartreuse.

**ANGIE.** Shut up.

**RAFAEL.** That's funny.

(ANGIE *punches RAFAEL in the arm.*)

Ow!

**ANGIE.** That didn't hurt.

**RAFAEL.** Yeah, it did.

**ANGIE.** No it didn't.

**RAFAEL.** How do you know? I'm telling you it did.

**ANGIE.** Really?

**RAFAEL.** What'd I say?

**ANGIE.** I'm sorry. Rafi? I didn't mean it. *(Beat.)* Rafi?

**RAFAEL.** Aaah! Psych!

**ANGIE.** I hate you.

**RAFAEL.** No cause it did, it did kinda hurt.

**ANGIE.** Liar.

**RAFAEL.** I'm serious.

**ANGIE.** I don't want to hear it.

**RAFAEL.** No cause see, you hit like a guy.

**ANGIE.** I do not.

**RAFAEL.** That's a good thing. Like most girls, they go *(Swatting the air.)* "I hate you. I hate you." You ain't like that. You're just like *(Throwing a left upper cut.)* Thwack. You hit hard, girl. You should be like a girl boxer.

**ANGIE.** I'm not going to be some girl boxer.

**RAFAEL.** No? What are you going to be?

**ANGIE.** I don't know. *(Beat.)* A doctor maybe. A pediatrician.

**RAFAEL.** Yeah? Well that's cool.

**ANGIE.** You think it's dumb.

**RAFAEL.** No I don't. Taking care of little kids, like when they get really sick and they can't even say what's wrong, or if they get hurt, and you make them better, that's tight. I think it's cool, you know, you got a plan. I think that's cool.

**ANGIE.** Everybody has a plan.

**RAFAEL.** Not everybody. Some people, they just kinda— *(Beat.)* I don't know. A lot of people, they don't think like that. They just end up where they end up. That's how it is for them.

*(Beat. An expensive car drives by.)*

**ANGIE.** Look at that car. That's a nice car. Who drives a car like that, I wonder.

**RAFAEL.** Some rich person, that's who.

**ANGIE.** What do you think it'd be like to drive a car like that?

**RAFAEL.** How would I know?

**ANGIE.** I bet it's amazing. All-leather interior and surround sound. And the ride, I bet the ride is like out of this world. Sometimes I see a car like that,

and it's so nice, it's all new and nice, and it's like—perfect. And I wonder what it'd be like to be that person, to be that person who gets to drive that car and live that life.

**RAFAEL.** What do you care about people you don't even know? Who cares?

**ANGIE.** I'm just talking.

**RAFAEL.** It's not like we can afford that kinda car. It's not like we're ever gonna have that kinda bank.

**ANGIE.** It's just something I wonder about.

**RAFAEL.** Yeah? Well it's a waste of time.

**ANGIE.** I just wonder. I just— Nothing. Never mind.

*(The sound of traffic. ANGIE and RAFAEL sit in silence a while.)*

**RAFAEL.** Sometimes I think what it'd be like if we could just keep going. Like get on the freeway and just go till we got to like the ocean, and then get on a boat or something and just keep going, just keep sailing till we got to like Fiji.

**ANGIE.** Fiji?

**RAFAEL.** Or wherever. Someplace else.

**ANGIE.** We could do that. Just take off.

**RAFAEL.** Yeah?

**ANGIE.** Yeah. Take off and go someplace where nobody'd know who we were, and we could like change our names and make new lives for ourselves and be these other people, these whole other people.

**RAFAEL.** That'd be cool.

**ANGIE.** Yeah, it would. *(Beat)* Look we shouldn't be ditching. I got a mid-term in English tomorrow.

**RAFAEL.** So? Come on. We could go down to the beach, go to Santa Monica or something.

**ANGIE.** No, Rafi, we should go.

**RAFAEL.** Is that what you want?

**ANGIE.** It's not about that.

**RAFAEL.** What's it about then?

**ANGIE.** I don't know. It's not about what I want. It's not that simple.

**RAFAEL.** Yeah it is. What do you want? Angie?

**ANGIE.** I don't know what I want. *(Beat)* I don't know.

*(RAFAEL and ANGIE kiss. The traffic goes by.)*

**Scene 3**

*Late morning. Sound of unseen children playing outside. The empty living room of a house for sale in Santa Monica. RACHEL and DAN MORSE, and VIVIANA RAMOS, their real estate agent.*

**VIVIANA.** It's a very nice property: three bedrooms, two baths, a bonus room. It goes on the market tomorrow and it's going to be snapped up in no time. In this area—well I don't need to tell you, houses in this price range, they're just isn't the inventory. If you're interested, we're going to have to come up with a very aggressive bid and then we're going to have to move on it fast.

**RACHEL.** I love the garden. It's so beautiful.

**VIVIANA.** They did a nice job with the landscaping. It has that English garden feel with the roses and the wisteria. It's very nice.

**DAN.** When was the house built?

**VIVIANA.** 1929, but of course it's been updated over the years. The master bath was redone and the French doors off the family room, that's all new. The kitchen needs a little work, but it's a nice size lot. You could always add on if you wanted to.

**RACHEL.** It's so pretty, so bright.

**VIVIANA.** It has very good light and a very nice flow.

**RACHEL.** Dan? What do you think?

**DAN.** It's nice. It's really nice.

**VIVIANA.** The school district in this area is first-rate. I don't know if you and Mr. Morse have children.

**RACHEL.** No, not yet, but we'd like to. We've been talking about it.

**VIVIANA.** So what do you do, Mr. Morse?

**RACHEL.** My husband is a seismologist.

**VIVIANA.** That's fascinating. Do you work for that agency? I forget the name. It's the one they always have on the news when there's an earthquake. It looks like they're all sitting in a little underground bunker somewhere, and they have that machine they use—I forget the name.

**DAN.** No, I don't.

**RACHEL.** My husband teaches at Caltech. He actually, he just got tenure.

**VIVIANA.** Congratulations. That's wonderful. But from Santa Monica, that's quite a commute you're looking at.

**DAN.** My wife has her heart set on being by the ocean.

**VIVIANA.** The air is so much better. So much cleaner and cooler.

**RACHEL.** I've just always dreamed of living by the ocean.

**DAN.** I know you have. I like being by the ocean, too.

**VIVIANA.** Seismology. Wow. I can't get over that. That's so neat.

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT  
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THE NEXT PAGE.**

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**WHEN SOMETHING WONDERFUL ENDS**  
**a history lesson**  
**a one woman, one Barbie play**  
**by Sherry Kramer**

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## BIOGRAPHY

Sherry Kramer is the author of more than 15 plays that have been produced here and abroad. Plays include: *David's RedHaired Death*, *The Wall of Water*, *What A Man Weighs*, *Things That Break*, *The World at Absolute Zero*, *The Mad Master*, *The Long Arms of Jupiter* (a croquet performance piece), *The Bay of Fundy*, *The Law Makes Evening Fall*, *A Permanent Signal*, *The Master and Margarita* (a singing-theatre work with Margaret Pine), and *Napoleon's China* (a play with music with Ann Haskell and Rebecca Newton). Selected Productions: Yale Repertory Theatre, NY's Second Stage, the Woolly Mammoth Theatre, Soho Repertory Theatre, Ensemble Studio Theatre, and the Theatre of the First Amendment. She has been awarded the Weissberger Playwriting Award, the Jane Chambers Playwriting Award, the L.A. Women in Theatre New Play Award, a New York Drama League Award, the Marvin Taylor Award, and is the recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, a McKnight National Fellowship, a Pew Charitable Trust/Playwrights Center Residency, and a commission from the Audrey Skirball-Kenis Theatre Project. She was the first national member of New Dramatists, and is a Core Member of the Playwrights' Center in Minneapolis. She holds MFAs from the Iowa Writers' Workshop and the Iowa Playwrights' Workshop. She teaches playwriting at Bennington College, The Michener Center for Writers at the University of Texas, Austin, and the Iowa Playwrights' Workshop, where she was previously head of the workshop. Her plays have been published by TCG, Vintage Books, and are available from Broadway Play Publishing.

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*When Something Wonderful Ends* premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2007, in a co-production with InterAct Theatre (Seth Rozin, Artistic Director). It was directed by Tom Moore with the following cast and staff:

WOMAN.....	Lori Wilner
Scenic Designer .....	Paul Owen
Costume Designer.....	Lorraine Venberg
Lighting Designer.....	Brian J. Lilienthal
Video Designer.....	Jason Czaja
Properties Designer .....	Mark Walston
Stage Manager.....	Michele Traub
Dramaturg .....	Carrie Hughes
Assistant Dramaturg.....	Diana Grisanti
Casting.....	Andrew Zerman
Directing Assistant.....	Kyle J. Schmidt

*When Something Wonderful Ends* was developed at PlayLabs, Polly Carl, Artistic Director; The Bay Area Playwrights Festival, Amy Mueller, Artistic Director; and the Ojai Playwrights Conference, Bob Egan, Artistic Director.

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## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

### **ONE WOMAN**

A Midwestern Reform Jewish baby boomer. She has black curly hair.

### **ONE BARBIE**

A 1964 near mint Bubble Cut Brunette.

The part was originally written for a mint condition, 1964 Redhead Swirl Ponytail Barbie, #850. The Swirl Ponytail Barbie has an unusual ponytail, which is caught in back with a yellow ribbon. Once taken down, as most little girls did immediately, it was almost impossible to return to its former swirly glory, and could never be mint condition again.

The role was recently re-written, however, for a Bubble Cut Brunette, near mint.

Barbies in less than mint condition are of course also invited to audition.

## **SET**

There is a large, antique desk, one like a school teacher might have used years ago, one of those substantial rectangles of wood, lots of desktop space. There is a big old fashioned roll-up map stand, with several maps of the Middle East. The cover, or top sheet of the roll up maps, is white, and photographs can be projected on it.

There are titles in the play, which should be presented in any way compatible with that of a 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom presentation in 1964. They might be projected, they might be on large sheets of paper on a huge flip-pad, they might be written by the actress on a blackboard, they might be presented in three or four different ways.

There are Barbie clothes and a Barbie Dream Car. There is a 1964 Brunette Barbie, still in her box, and 59 vintage Barbie outfits. A pile of unmatched Barbie shoes. A smaller pile of Ken clothes. A vintage Barbie Dream House. And a lot of Ziploc bags. Throughout the play, as appropriate, the actress sorts Barbie clothes, and puts them in Ziploc bags.

There are packing boxes, and evidence of things other than Barbie clothes being packed. The set might look pretty cluttered when the audience sits down. Or the desk might be the only thing they see.

## **CANDY**

The actress hands out Brach's cinnamon discs to audience members as they enter the theatre. Or perhaps the ushers do it. But it would be better if the actress did it. If handing out wrapped candies before a performance makes your house management uneasy you might want to include this in the turn-off-your-cell phone speech:

Please unwrap and enjoy the cinnamon candies now—or put them aside for after the show. Please do not unwrap them during the show, even if you do it painfully slowly, excruciatingly slowly, as if you were a deer in headlights who thinks that if he doesn't move you can't see him. Of course you can see him. He's right there. It doesn't matter how long he doesn't move, he's not going to disappear. It doesn't matter how sloooowly you unwrap your candy.

We can all hear you. Thank you.

*For my mother and father*

# WHEN SOMETHING WONDERFUL ENDS

## *Title: When Something Wonderful Ends*

**WOMAN.** When something wonderful ends, everybody wants to know how it happened. “How did it come to this,” they like to say. And “Why didn’t we see it coming in time.” They like saying that, a lot. And then they get tired of saying it. The bewildered common comfort they got out of saying it wears off, and they get busy looking for something else to say. They get busy trying to figure out how the end of this wonderful something started so they can say, “Ah, now I *see* how it came to this. I *see* why nobody saw it coming.” They like saying this about a million times more than they liked saying they didn’t see. They think seeing, and knowing, are going to change things.

Here’s the good news. I *know* how it came to this. I *know* why we didn’t see it coming. I even know the exact moment the end started and where I was at the time.

I was at the Toy Box on the Plaza, Springfield, Missouri’s first shopping center, situated five miles south of downtown, on historic Route 66. Now, spending money at a shopping center five miles south of downtown meant that the downtown, finding itself the road not taken, would one day, soon, wither and fade, so the Age of Enlightenment wasn’t the only thing dying at this moment, the downtown was too—and not emblematically, but physically, it was really and truly and specifically dying because I was buying a dress. A dress with a name. A dress called Enchanted Evening. Okay, my mother was buying it for me. I was ten years old, so my mother put me in the car. In the front seat, of the car. The world looked different back then, the un-Ralph Nader changed world, no car seats, not even any seat belts, you could run the hell all over the car. When we took family trips in the station wagon, Mom and Dad took a little mattress and spread it out in the back and then it was nap time, party time, the three of us kids, all the way to Cape Cod three times and Miami Beach twice. Oh, and there were cigarette ads everywhere before Nader changed the world. Remember how great cigarette commercials looked? Sexy women, manly men? My mother smoked Herbert Tarytons, the most elegant pack of cigarettes in the world. White background, and no design but this lovely regal blue crown. I don’t think the Tarytons killed her. Of course, you can’t be sure of much of anything nowadays. So, anyway, my mother plopped me into the car, and drove us from our house in Brentwood, Springfield’s very first subdivision, to the Toy Box on the Plaza, where I was allowed to pick out, from a whole wall of boxes filled with unimaginable delight—one outfit.

*(I bring out Enchanted Evening)*

This is Enchanted Evening. I think it cost a dollar fifty. A Barbie only cost three seventy-five. I know because I still have the box.

*(I bring out my Barbie, still in the box. I take my Barbie out of the box.)*

This is a Bubble Cut Brunette Barbie, a model made between 1962 and 1964. She is a basic Barbie, nothing really rare about her. Solid, unremarkable, excellent condition but not exactly mint.

*(I dress Barbie in Enchanted Evening)*

Enchanted Evening is a classic Barbie outfit. A pink satin evening gown with a huge, full, round train, the skirt gathered up tight at the waist with a pink rose, which causes it to start off as a tight sheath, then falls in graceful folds that create an elegant drape. A great look, especially if you don't actually have to walk in it. It's from the Golden Age of Barbie, 1959-65. It is one of the most valuable of all the Barbie outfits I have—worth three thousand dollars, NRFP—Never Removed From Package, or three hundred fifty dollars, MC—mint condition, with *all* the accessories. These include—

*(I hold up each one as I mention them.)*

—a white fur stole lined with pink satin. Sparkly pink plastic shoes. Pearls. Pearl earrings. And opera length gloves. And you can forget about the big money if it's not mint—twenty bucks on eBay, if it's missing an earring or is worn or discolored in any way.

My Enchanted Evening is not worn. It is mint. It's almost as if I'd never played with it. None of my Barbie clothes—and I have fifty-nine outfits, virtually everything manufactured by Mattel from 1960 to 1965—none of these fifty-nine outfits—with the exception of a corduroy jumper with felt poodle appliqué called Friday Night Date which is stained and discolored and may actually belong to Sara Thomas, from across the street—none of my outfits show any sign of being worn at all. Enchanted Evening looks as good as the day I bought it. March 4, 1964.

And this is how I discovered that that very day was the start of the end of something wonderful. I was driving back to Springfield to start the long process of packing up my parents' home. I put a book on tape into my CD player, a history book about the U.S. and the Middle East. It astonished me. I realized that while I had been acquiring Enchanted Evening, serial number 783, for my bubble cut Barbie, serial number 750, at the *exact same moment*, in 1964, a SOFA, S-O-F-A, or Status Of Forces Agreement, had just been made the official law of the land. Not this land. Iran. SOFAs were common, we signed then whenever our troops were stationed in foreign lands, but the results of this one weren't. This SOFA started the cascade of events that lifts the Ayatollah Khomeini, until then a mild mannered cleric minding his own Islamic business, into a rabid dog of rage, launching his career as the official

Islamist godfather of hate until he passes the baton to Osama, though not directly, we'll get to that, who launches two planes into the Twin Towers, one into the Pentagon, and one into the ground. Which then launches America's attack on Iraq. Which then—well, we're just at *that* which then.

***Title: The Which Then***

Here's what the which-then looks like, from my point of view, the place from which I am packing up the house and sorting my Barbie clothes and watching America's dream go bad.

I am on my way to the cemetery, to put some gladiolas on my mother's grave. It's a frail, magical ritual, my mother brought flowers to her mother's grave, and now I'm doing it for her. It's a little bit like performing a miracle—doing something beautiful for the dead. It's impossible, of course, to do anything for the dead, still, as I drive away from the cemetery, every single time I feel the willfulness of the miracle, I see that the impossible is ordinary and everyday and right in front of me, just around the tiny corners of this world there is always this possibility of contact with the unseen, with the divine, and then it hits me, double barreled, this sudden *ache* hits me, because this miracle is not enough, it changes nothing, the miracle occurs, "Woman does something for the dead" is the headline, the headline runs every time, and nothing changes. I pull out of the cemetery and that's it. Miracle over.

I have a Picture of the Miracle.

*(I show a picture of the gladiolas at my mother's grave. I'm guessing this will be on the screen.)*

My mother died a few months before 9/11, so I have over six years of pictures like this. It's some sort of documentary impulse, I've always had it, yesterday I found all my old scrapbooks—here's one I made when I was twelve, not about ponies or trips to the beach, but about the first and most important controversy of my life—

*(I pull the scrapbook out of a box, it has flowers cut out of foil wrapping paper on the front.)*

"JOHN LENNON CLAIMS THE BEATLES ARE MORE POPULAR THAN JESUS."

*(I open it to a couple pages showing newspaper clippings about the controversy. Then I open the scrapbook to a page where the lyrics to "All You Need Is Love" are carefully, lovingly cut out of different colors of foil wrapping paper and pasted onto separate pages, or cut like a paper-doll chain out of a continuous piece of paper.)*

When you cut out the words "All You Need Is Love"—

*(And I don't sing, I say the lyrics, dead-pan, as I turn each page or pull out the chain.)*

All you need is love *(Next page or segment.)* All you need is love, love. *(Next page or segment.)* Love is all you need and paste it into a scrapbook with sacred photos of Paul, John, George and Ringo—

*(I close, and re-pack the scrapbook.)*

—that scrapbook is transformed into a magical tome that throbs with a power only a 12-year-old girl can know.

*(And show a few more pictures of flowers.)*

I'm not twelve any longer. I know a photo doesn't have a lot of power. These aren't miracles after all, they're just pictures of miracles. Small miracles, that don't have the power to transform the world beyond the cemetery gates.

Most of the other graves in the cemetery have artificial flowers on them. I think that the flowers I put on my mother's grave are better than the artificial ones people put on the graves of their loved ones, nearby. I think that the miracle *I* make is better than the miracle *they* make.

And I think this: that anytime a person puts *their* miraculous ritual with their dead above somebody *else's* miraculous ritual with theirs, means the start of something very unfine. In my case, the unfineness manifests itself in a little arrogant smug smallness. This arrogant smug smallness does two things. It files down some of the finer points of my soul, and this filing down process, it's cumulative, it's catastrophic, it will show up in twenty years as a dull, dead place at my very center—but that's life, you know? That's the way life and time accrue. And the other thing it does is put me squarely in a vast historical context. My grieving heart has landed me smack dab in the center of a ritual that has had some of the ugliest unintended consequences the world has ever known. Miraculous rituals with the dead are the very heart of all religious belief—especially now that we don't spend a lot of time appeasing the weather and the crop gods.

One of the sadder things about life on this planet is that about half of all the rotten things people do to each other start off as miracles they're trying to do for their dead. Filling up the pyramid of someone you love with lots of nice things to eat in the next life—thoughtful. Burying seven thousand slaves alive to help them around the house on the other side—not. I slipped a piece of wrapped candy into my mother's hand, as we left her. A Brach's cinnamon disc—her favorite candy, my favorite candy. Giving her a token—a little sweet to bribe the gods, or tip the boatman, seemed terribly significant at the time. And not just significant—but necessary. Because when your mother dies, and you are, in some way that makes no sense at all and all the sense in the world, dragged pretty far along with her into that other place—you un-

derstand that *anything* is possible. You *understand the point of religion*—to issue the passports and publish the train schedules and arrange the passage that is the transformation of the living into the dead. In the end, *all* religion is basically just a construct to organize what happens after. To hold back the night. The Reform Jewish night, by the way, is incredibly long and completely dark, because Reform Jews don't believe in heaven or hell.

The fear of death is the thing that drives all our drives.

Of course, the modern age has a new kind of drive. This kind.

*(I take out Barbie's Dream Car.)*

This is Barbie's Dream Car.

That's its actual name, the Dream Car. When you put Barbie in it, you dreamed about the day you'd be behind the wheel. But the thing about driving in your dreams is—you never run out of gas. Because running out of gas—as U.S. policy in the Middle East for the past 50 years will attest to—is a nightmare. A nightmare about oil—about oil and America, the Miracle Nation.

### ***Title: America, the Miracle Nation***

You know, we Americans are pretty arrogant. We think we invented the car, right? This may be why we think our drive is better than anybody *else's* drive. Why we think we're the owners and operators of the modern age. We live here, in this miracle of a nation—and it is a miracle, or close to it, an Enlightenment nation. I think that most Americans have forgotten, or never really understood, that before America, there was no such thing as a nation where church and state were separate. Where would the power and authority to rule, where would it come from, if it didn't come from God? Like I said, most Americans don't get this. In the old worlds, governments were a franchise arrangement, God was always the *owner*—we were the just the *operators*.

Not in America. In America we're the owners, and it was always a Mom and Pop store. God was just a shareholder at the very best, and he owned a *minimal* amount of stock. Sundays. He owned Sundays. And a few Catholic schools. He did not have the controlling shares in a country for the first time in history.

The Enlightenment had invented America shortly after it invented a new benign but non-interventionalist God, and a new way of believing in him: Deism. Most religions ask you to use your relationship with other people to prove something to God, to climb on top of other people to get to him—Deism didn't. It made a blueprint for a new kind of country. America is the child of Deists like Tom Jefferson, who was the intellectual child of the most famous Deist of all, David Hume, whose writings directly inspired the Decla-

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# CLARISSE AND LARMON

## by Deb Margolin

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## BIOGRAPHY

Deb Margolin is a playwright, performance artist and founding member of Split Britches Theater Company. She is the author of eight full-length solo performance pieces, which she has toured throughout the United States, and is the recipient of a 1999-2000 OBIE Award for Sustained Excellence of Performance. In February of 2001, PS122 presented Ms. Margolin's play *Three Seconds in the Key*, a meditation on illness, love and basketball, and the play was premiered officially under the auspices of New Georges at Baruch Performing Arts Center in April of 2004. Ms. Margolin has been artist-in-residence at Hampshire College and University of Hawaii and Zale writer-in-residence at Tulane University, and is currently an Associate Professor of Playwriting and Performance in Yale University's Theater Studies Program. A book of Ms. Margolin's performance pieces and plays, entitled *Of All The Nerve: Deb Margolin SOLO*, was published in 1999 by Cassell/Continuum Press. She was awarded the 2005 Richard H. Brodhead Prize for Teaching Excellence at Yale University, and the 2005 Kesselring Playwriting Prize.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Clarisse and Laron* was presented in a non-Equity production for 5 performances as a part of the IGNITE Festival under the auspices of Synapse Productions in October 2006, starring Kathleen Chalfant and Shawn Eliot. The play had its world premiere in the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2007. It was directed by Jessica Burgess with the following cast and staff:

CLARISSE .....	Romi Dias
LARMON .....	Keith Randolph Smith
SOLDIER .....	Timo Aker
Scenic Designer .....	Paul Owen
Costume Designer.....	Susan Neason
Lighting Designer.....	Paul Werner
Sound Designer .....	Benjamin Marcum
Properties Designer .....	Doc Manning
Fight Director .....	Lee Look
Stage Managers .....	Michael D. Domue, Debra Anne Gasper
Production Assistant.....	Melissa Miller
Dramaturg .....	Joanna K. Donehower
Assistant Dramaturg.....	Diana Grisanti

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

CLARISSE  
LARMON  
SOLDIER

# CLARISSE AND LARMON

*Lights up on LARMON and CLARISSE, a tattered, middle-aged couple sitting at a nondescript wooden table. A SOLDIER is standing at attention before them. A photograph, unseen by the audience, is on the table at which CLARISSE and LARMON are seated. The room is like a small interrogation room: undecorated, spare, small and green in cast.*

**CLARISSE.** This is all you have?

**SOLDIER.** Yes. Yes, I'm afraid so.

**LARMON.** There was no other...evidence? No other...

**SOLDIER.** No, I'm afraid not.

**LARMON.** Why couldn't you have brought...brought...given us...the actual...part...instead of this...this photograph?

**SOLDIER.** I'm afraid it would have been...

**CLARISSE.** Why are you so *afraid* of everything?

**SOLDIER.** Pardon me, ma'am?

**CLARISSE.** You're afraid this and you're afraid that and you're afraid the other thing!

**SOLDIER.** Ma'am...

**LARMON.** Clarisse, it's just a figure of speech.

**SOLDIER.** I understand, sir; she's upset...

**LARMON.** That's no excuse!

**CLARISSE.** I'm not upset!

**LARMON.** All we have is this knee, shin, ankle and foot, and not even the real knee, shin, ankle or foot, just a *picture* of them, and that's all we have left, and you're NOT UPSET?

**CLARISSE.** No.

**LARMON.** We are bereft and aggrieved and we've lost everything and all we have is this bargain basement snapshot of the lower part of one of his legs...

**CLARISSE.** Left leg, in case you hadn't noticed...

**LARMON.** ...and you are not upset? You are not disturbed?

**CLARISSE.** You are yelling at me as if I've said something. I have not said anything.

**LARMON.** Well, say something!

**CLARISSE.** You make it sound so easy to say things!

**SOLDIER.** I am terribly sorry for your loss, sir. Madam. I will leave you alone now. Here is a photograph of me, and on the other side is a telephone number. Please don't hesitate to call me with any questions you may have.

*(CLARISSE takes photo of soldier and drops it on the floor. CLARISSE and LARMON stare at him. He salutes and exits, stage left. CLARISSE and LARMON stare at photograph of leg before them in silence.)*

**CLARISSE.** Why do you suppose...

**LARMON.** I can't...

**CLARISSE.** I don't...

*(Silence.)*

*(They laugh.)*

**LARMON.** Look...

**CLARISSE.** Look at what?

**LARMON.** Look at the decline of his toes, the way they go down so evenly in height, like climbing down a mountain, or a hill, or a flight of stairs.

**CLARISSE.** I think they look like a xylophone, like the different notes of the xylophone.

*(Silence.)*

**LARMON.** When you consider the whole thing, it looks like Italy.

**CLARISSE.** You only say that because they always told us in school that Italy is shaped like a boot.

**LARMON.** They told us that because it's true.

**CLARISSE.** It may be true, but that may or may not be why they told us that.

**LARMON.** What, dear?

**CLARISSE.** People have many different reasons for telling you things. Their being true is often not the reason.

**LARMON.** Of course. The truth is just an option.

**CLARISSE.** Look at his knee.

**LARMON.** What about it?

**CLARISSE.** He knelt on that knee. Knelt comes from the word knee.

**LARMON.** Yes! I never thought of that!

**CLARISSE.** I like it when parts of the body get turned into verbs!

**LARMON.** But in the past tense, it's always easier, because the body part is further away!

**CLARISSE.** Do you think so?

**LARMON.** Tell me some more body parts like that!

**CLARISSE.** Armed comes from the word arm and palmed from the word palm and muscled from the word muscle and headed from the word head and minded from the word mind.

**LARMON.** Yes! And did you hear about the woman who backed into an airplane propeller?

**CLARISSE.** No.

**LARMON.** *Disaster!* Haha!

*(Pause.)*

**CLARISSE.** He knelt...

**LARMON.** From the word knee...

**CLARISSE.** ...and made me pray for that lobster you killed.

**LARMON.** Bessie Behemoth.

**CLARISSE.** Why did you name that lobster? Why did you name it?

**LARMON.** I was just having fun.

**CLARISSE.** It upset the boy.

**LARMON.** I know. I'm sorry.

**CLARISSE.** He knelt and prayed for the soul of that lobster.

**LARMON.** Of Bessie. Yes.

**CLARISSE.** And then he apologized to things for throwing them in the garbage can.

**LARMON.** Did he?

**CLARISSE.** Yes. And he'd tell them what a beautiful thing it would be to go in the garbage! How it was the beginning of a long journey, on trucks, to open landfills, through fire and into eternity.

**LARMON.** He described all of that?

**CLARISSE.** Yes.

**LARMON.** Well maybe he was prescient.

**CLARISSE.** It sounds like a description of being condemned to Hell.

*(Silence.)*

This knee. This shin, this foot. They were inside my body once.

**LARMON.** Clarisse dearest...

**CLARISSE.** They always say putting things back in the earth is a return to where things came from, but he came from Me. From my body. He didn't come from some briar patch, or golf course, he came from ME. They should put him back...

**LARMON.** Dearest Clarisse...he wouldn't fit anymore...

**CLARISSE.** He wouldn't fit...

**LARMON.** I...I was thinking...when that...when that...man...was here, that...man...I was thinking: shouldn't they have covered it up...shouldn't it

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**BATCH**  
**AN AMERICAN BACHELOR/ETTE PARTY**  
**SPECTACLE IN SIX SEXES**  
**conceived by Whit MacLaughlin and Alice Tuan**  
**with text by Alice Tuan**  
**created by New Paradise Laboratories**

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**Batch**  
**an american bachelor/ette party spectacle**  
**in six sexes**

Conceived by Whit MacLaughlin and Alice Tuan

With Text by Alice Tuan

With Additional Text by:

Mary McCool, Matt Saunders, McKenna Kerrigan, Lee Ann Etzold, Jeb Krieger, Aaron Mumaw and Whit MacLaughlin.

Created by New Paradise Laboratories

## **BIOGRAPHIES**

**Alice Tuan** is the author of *Last of the Suns* (Ma-Yi Theater Company, Berkeley Repertory Theatre), *Ikebana* (East West Players), *Some Asians* (Perishable Theatre, UMASS Amherst), *Manilova* (New Georges), *The Roaring Girl* (Foundry Theatre) and the hypertext play *Coastline* (Serious Play! Theatre Ensemble, The Edinburgh Fringe). *Ajax (por nobody)*, presented by New York's Flea Theater and performed at the Melbourne Fringe in September 2001, is archived in The Billy Rose Collection at Lincoln Center and was recently published in the anthology *New Downtown Now*. Her short plays *F.E.T.C.H.* and *Coco Puffs* were seen at previous Humana Festivals. Ms. Tuan received an emerging artist notice from New York's Colbert Award for Excellence as well as Los Angeles's Richard E. Sherwood Award. She holds an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Brown University and is based in Los Angeles.

**Whit MacLaughlin** is the Obie Award-winning artistic director of Philadelphia's New Paradise Laboratories (NPL). Founded in 1996, NPL has performed in venues such as Ontological Theater and P.S. 122 in New York City, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis and The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. Mr. MacLaughlin also directs freelance around the country. He is the recipient of a 2002 Pew Charitable Trust Fellowship in Performance Art. His work with NPL includes *The Fab 4 Reach the Pearly Gates*, depicting the Beatles at the end of time; *This Mansion is a Hole*, a deconstruction of the philosophies of Hugh Hefner; *Rose Selavy Takes a Lover in Philadelphia*, an examination of Philadelphia's utopian history; and *Prom*, an anthropological work for young adults.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Batch: An American Bachelor/ette Party Spectacle* premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2007. It was directed by Whit MacLaughlin with the following cast and staff:

### Round 1 and Beyond:

Betsy Competitive (the bride) ..... McKenna Kerrigan  
Matty Jay (former maid of honor) ..... Jeb Kreager  
Betty Lee (the soon-to-be maid of honor) ..... Lee Ann Etzold  
Becky Steem ..... Matt Saunders  
Maya Faye ..... Aaron Mumaw  
Mary Bette ..... Mary McCool

### Round 2 and Beyond:

Taggis (the groom) ..... Aaron Mumaw  
Chet (best man) ..... Matt Saunders  
Smoak (in a jacket) ..... Jeb Kreager  
Lars ..... Lee Ann Etzold  
Mike ..... Mary McCool  
Wesley ..... McKenna Kerrigan

### Also:

Accomplices: Marie A. Antoinette, Special K, Punch, Punch and Punch; The Saynads, Myclops, Dancers and a Taxi Cab Driver

Scenic Designer ..... Matt Saunders  
Costume Designer ..... Rosemarie McKelvey  
Lighting Designer ..... Brian J. Lilienthal  
Sound Designer ..... Whit MacLaughlin  
Video Designer ..... Jorge Cousineau  
Properties Designer ..... Ron Riall  
Stage Manager ..... Nancy Pittelman  
Production Assistant ..... Danielle Teague-Daniels  
Dramaturg ..... Adrien-Alice Hansel  
Assistant Dramaturg ..... Diana Grisanti  
Directing Assistant ..... Joanna K. Donehower

*Batch* was commissioned by the Actors Theatre of Louisville, and was originally performed at the Connection, a nightclub in Louisville, KY.

*“No worthy problem can be solved on its original plane of conception.”*

—Einstein as quoted by George Saunders

## DIRECTOR/CO-CREATOR'S NOTE

*Batch: An American Bachelor/ette Party Spectacle* is a reinvention of the Greek Satyr Play, both literally (there are satyrs in it!) and derivationally. It is part of a series of pieces created with my company, New Paradise Laboratories. The first piece in the series is called *Prom* and was developed in collaboration with the Children's Theatre Company of Minneapolis as a pilot project for their teen theatre initiative. The third piece is tentatively called *Mort* and will explore the phenomenon of Funeral Parties. It goes without saying that the series has as its primary subject three types of American rite-of-passage parties.

All three pieces eschew traditional dramaturgical development and spring from what you might call "party logic"—the specific hopes, dreams, and narrative structure of the party experience. There is a measure of traditional character development in both *Batch* and *Prom* in addition to an odd time sense, but neither are character dramas, per se. After all, what happens in them and at parties? You go to a party for a purpose, holding some vision of a special social environment as a possibility; maybe you get a bit intoxicated, and every once in a while the sky opens up and you go home having a truly extraordinary experience. Every once in a while. Otherwise, parties can range in quality from humdrum to diverting, but one kinda hopes for the transcendental.

I have always been intrigued, like most theatre people, with the specter of the Greek festival play experience. It's an old saw, but we assume that the Greek plays had a celebratory function, were sprung from dance, and that most of the audience would have been familiar with the subject matter of the plays. The fun, the dash, the panache, the power of the plays came from the way that the familiar stories were told. And I've always been obsessed with the way that the Greek play experience was organized symphonically to marshal the energies of prophesy and mythology in the service of some sort of collective experience.

We have striven to lasso some of that sort of energy with *Batch*. In performance, it's almost like a crazy, delirious dream-dance. And it springs from a common experience—most of us have attended a pre-nup party or, maybe, have purposely NOT attended. The piece trades on an audience's preconceptions of these parties. I would say that *Batch* really comes to life as an "experience" rather than as a play. I applaud Alice, our intrepid playwright, for trying to wrestle it onto the page. *Batch* truly was a mind-boggling collaboration, and like much of my favorite theatre, it exists primarily in the memories of the beholders.

One last spin: I am quite excited by the fact that *Prom* was created for young audiences. *Batch* was available to those old enough to gain entry to a piece with a light X rating. The pieces, oddly, seem to fit together into a mosaic that is often disallowed in contemporary culture, late childhood into early adulthood, but which, in reality, describes a continuity that is very much at the heart of life itself: growth, sex, and the mysterious transformation of youth into adulthood and social responsibility.

—*Whit MacLaughlin*

# Batch

## an american bachelor/ette party spectacle in six sexes

Four screens surround a square stage with an underneath. There is a hole in the corner where batches of folk enter and exit vertically.

The screen world is depicted in Courier.

### PREAMBLE

BETSY stands alone, live. She imperceptibly turns.

The screens,  
like an orbit,  
focus onto TAGGIS—  
walking, "walking" with BETSY.  
Her fingers are crossed behind her back.  
She regards him.  
They continue to "walk" together.  
Claudine Longet sings "The Look of Love".  
The guests arrive and set up camera and pose.  
TAGGIS's image fades from the screens.

### 1. Selecting a Date and Time

**MATTY.** So when...

**BETTY LEE.** Oh wait!

(BETTY LEE flips camera on and:

*We see the party from the Onstage Cam,  
standing like cake icons.)*

**ANNOUNCER.** (Voice over.) BACHELORETTE PARTY: A PRE-NUPTIAL AGREEMENT WHERE YOU PLAN A GOODBYE TO ALL YOUR FORMER AND FUTURE LOVERS!

(Ding!)

**BETTY LEE.** (About video-ing) For posterity.

**MATTY.** ...so when are you available, then?

(Pause.)

**BETSY.** Well...

**MATTY.** It's still on, isn't it?

**BETTY LEE.** Of course it's on!

**BECKY STEEM.** Of course it's on...

**MATTY.** I just can't tell anymore.

**BECKY STEEM.** ...Like a Catholic's condom, it's on.

(MAYA enters. *The veil of maya is upon us.*)

**MARY BETTE.** Maya

**MAYA.** Hello everybody. Sorry I'm late.

**MARY BETTE.** Might not even be happening.

**MAYA.** Really.

**BECKY STEEM.** It will happen...

**MARY BETTE.** I'm not so sure.

**BECKY STEEM.** ...like a black girl in the White House, it will happen.

**MAYA.** You kill it, Mary Bette?

**MARY BETTE.** No, Maya.

**BETTY LEE.** Shush you two. It will happen.

**MATTY.** Because we should prob-ably have it within the week since, since the, the, the 'wedding' itself is, is in, in a, in a week (?), that's what you said yes, Betsy? 'In, like, a week'?

**MARY BETTE.** Not even a date yet.

**MAYA.** What's the point.

**MATTY.** Oh I don't know, I don't know anymore.

**BETSY.** We're not really doing this are we?

(*The party nods in unison. Ding!*)

*She collapses.*

*Betsy lays unconscious on the screen.*

*They pick her up.)*

**MATTY.** I'm still Maid of Honor, right? —Betsy?

**BETTY LEE.** I've compiled a list of themes—Greek, Egyptian, or Roman...

**MATTY.** I'm not...I'm not...I'm not...

**BETTY LEE.** ...western, oriental or southern...village people, monster truck or traditional American...

**MATTY.** I'm not the Maid of Honor anymore, Betsy? Betsy? Betsy?

## 2. Choose a Theme

**MARY BETTE.** So what *is* the theme, Betty Lee?

**BETSY.** I don't need a theme.

**MATTY.** O Betsy

**BETTY LEE.** There's a spa option

**MATTY.** We'll get you good and scrubbed

**MAYA.** Who's paying?

**MATTY.** Well

**BETTY LEE.** Well

**BETSY.** I don't think this should cost any...

**MARY BETTE.** If we go to the mall—

**BETTY LEE.** Something *special* for God's sake. Our Betsy, our darling favorite Betsy, is deciding to *marry* (*Bleatingly.*)

**BECKY STEEM.** A man even

**MATTY.** And what's wrong with that?

**BECKY STEEM.** I didn't say anything about wrong—

**MATTY.** Your tone did.

(*BETSY wonders how she is gonna get through her friends.*)

**BECKY STEEM.** What *have* you got there, Matty Jay?

**MATTY.** It's a condom corsage.

**MARY BETTE.** You consider Taggis a 'man'?

**MAYA.** His equipment says so.

**MARY BETTE.** That shit can be strapped on, shit. Betsy just turns into whatever fits her moment. Can't face the music, she just switches tunes.

(*MARY BETTE kisses BETSY deeply.*)

**MAYA.** Enough. (*Watches more.*) Enough, Mary Bette.

**MARY BETTE.** By any means necessary, right Betsy?

**MAYA.** I completely support whatever decision you make, Bets.

(*BETSY is grateful to MAYA through her eyes.*)

*MAYA shoots BETSY with the Onstage Cam.*)

**BETSY.** And what are the other options?

(*Ding! She collapses.*)

*BETSY lays unconscious.*

*The party sets her up again.*)

### 3. Location

**BETTY LEE.** Well there's the winery—

**MATTY.** Who'd drive?

**BETTY LEE.** Or the park for a picnic.

**MATTY.** I don't trust those grills.

**BETTY LEE.** Or the skating rink.

**MATTY.** You all skate?

**BECKY STEEM.** The skating rink is not just for skating.

**MATTY.** What is it for, Becky Steem: *hooking out?*

**MAYA.** I thought this was supposed to be a 'hot' affair

**MARY BETTE.** With Betsy's oh so cold now —

**BETSY.** Mary Bette.

*(Pause.)*

**BETSY.** It was a choice.

**MARY BETTE.** Straight up.

*(Pabdul.)*

**BETSY.** *Idiots.* It's real.

**MARY BETTE.** So versatile, you are, Betsy?

**BETSY.** It's not gonna be like any marriage anyone could ever have dreamed of.

**MATTY.** How about the Busch Brewery?

**BETSY.** We've never even kissed yet.

**MAYA.** It's true.

**MARY BETTE.** Yeah right.

**MATTY.** They give away a free—

**BETSY.** We've never touched.

**ALL.** *What!?*

**MARY BETTE.** O please!

**BETTY LEE.** It's true.

**MATTY.** They give away a free pitcher for parties larger than 5.

**BETTY LEE.** Who will drive?

**MATTY.** We'll get a limo.

**BETTY LEE.** Who will pay?

**MAYA.** My daddy has a boat.

**MATTY.** You all swim?

**MARY BETTE.** And there are other fish in the sea.

**BETTY LEE.** Remember: our goal is to have fun, blow off steam and create fond memories—not nightmares—for you, Betsy Competitive.

**BETSY.** *(Looking at BECKY.)* Whose steam are we blowing?

*(POW!)*

*All but BETSY collapse.*

*BETSY has a sort of victory dance.)*

**BETSY.** *(Sings.)* *not gonna be like any other marriage, do do do do do do*

*(The CHORUS, comprised of the 6 performers in neutral gaze, look on.)*

**4. Poll**

*Onstage Cam.*

**MAYA.** We should definitely get a stripper.

**ALL.** YES! OO! HOO!

**MAYA.** Two of 'em!

**MARY BETTE.** No, THREE!

**BETSY.** Not necessarily

**MATTY.** Where would we call?

**BECKY STEEM.** With epic cocks.

**ALL.** BECKY STEEM!

**MATTY.** Becky Steem? Where would we call?

**BETSY.** NO no no no no no...

**BECKY STEEM.** That's what she wants. Look in her eyes.

**BETSY.** Sure, Becky Steem: if you know of any, bring 'em all along.

**BECKY STEEM.** I will.

**BETTY LEE.** Well I have a menu of men here, so *many* delicious dishes, ladies!

**MARY BETTE.** Well if you think about it—

**BECKY STEEM.** O well there you go thinking about it.

**MARY BETTE.** It *is* the one thing that Taggis would load his gun for.

**MAYA.** No, darling. He'd *watch*.

*(Yo ho! The BATCH'ETTES cackle.)*

**BETTY LEE.** It'll be fun.

**BETSY.** Well what have you got planned, Betty Lee?

*(BECKY STEEM shoots BETTY LEE's menu with Onstage Cam.)*

**BETTY LEE.** Appetizer! Entrée! SWEETS! And Mary Bette can make her special PUNCH.

**BETSY.** What else?

**BETTY LEE.** It'll be a fucking buffet!

**MATTY.** Icebreaker games for sure.

**BETSY.** No no no.

**MARY BETTE.** Like 'What Am I'?

**BETSY.** No no no.

*(Closeup on MARY BETTE:)*

**MARY BETTE.** Where everybody gets a slip of paper they can't see, with a phrase like *virgin*, or *blowjob*, or *wife-icide*, all pinned up on their backs? And then everyone has to ask everyone else what they are?

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**dark play  
or  
stories for boys**  
**by Carlos Murillo**

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## BIOGRAPHY

Carlos Murillo's *dark play or stories for boys* received its world premiere at the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville. Other plays include: *Unfinished American Highwayscape #9 & 32*, *Mimesophobia*, *A Human Interest Story*, *Offspring of the Cold War*, *Schadenfreude*, *Near Death Experiences With Leni Riefenstahl*, *Never Whistle While You're Pissing* and *Subterraneans*. They have been produced in NY (SPF, En Garde Arts, Soho Rep, The Hangar), LA (Theatre @ Boston Court, Circle X, Son of Semele), Chicago (Walkabout Theatre, DePaul University), Atlanta (Actors Express), Minneapolis (Red Eye), Seattle (The Group) and Austin (dirigo group). They have been developed at The Public, NY Theatre Workshop, The Goodman, South Coast Rep, Portland Center Stage, Madison Rep, the Sundance Institute, The Playwrights' Center, Bay Area Playwrights Festival, A.S.K., Annex Theatre, UC Santa Barbara and others. His work has been published by *TheatreForum*, Heinemann and Smith & Kraus. He has received grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, the Minnesota State Arts Board, the Jerome Foundation and is a two-time recipient of the National Latino Playwriting Award. Carlos teaches at The Theatre School of DePaul University in Chicago and is a member of New Dramatists.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*dark play or stories for boys* premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2007. It was directed by Michael John Garcés with the following cast and staff:

NICK .....	Matthew Stadelmann
MOLLY/RACHEL .....	Liz Morton
ADAM .....	Will Rogers
MALE NETIZEN .....	Lou Sumrall
FEMALE NETIZEN .....	Jennifer Mendenhall
Scenic Designer .....	Michael B. Raiford
Costume Designer .....	Lorraine Venberg
Lighting Designer .....	Brian J. Lilienthal
Sound Designer .....	Matt Callahan
Video Designer .....	Jason Czaja
Properties Designer .....	Mark Walston
Fight Director .....	Drew Fracher
Stage Manager .....	Megan Schwarz
Dramaturg .....	Mary Resing
Assistant Dramaturg .....	Diana Grisanti
Casting .....	Judy Bowman Casting
Directing Assistant .....	Tina Sanchez

*dark play or stories for boys* was written during a residency at the 2005 University of California Santa Barbara Summer Theatre Lab, Naomi Iizuka, Artistic Director. The playwright wishes to acknowledge the students in the lab who were instrumental in the writing of this play, as well as Lisa Portes, the director of the workshop.

The play received a workshop production at The Theatre School of DePaul University in January 2006, directed by the author.

The play was presented in a staged reading as part of the 2006 Latino Theatre Festival at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, directed by the author.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

NICK

MOLLY/RACHEL

ADAM

MALE NETIZEN, also plays CHANGE HUSTLER, JOCK,  
SOCCERDUDE2891,  
THAIBABESLONELYINUSOFA@YAHOO.COM,  
DONTTREADONME76, TONY

FEMALE NETIZEN, also plays SARAH, MS. SPIEGEL, MOTHER,  
OLIVIA

## **TIME**

Now.

## **PLACE**

A college dorm room.

An affluent town along the Southern California coast.

Cyberspace.

## **A NOTE ON PUNCTUATION**

A double slash (//) indicates the point where a subsequent speech overlaps.

# dark play or stories for boys

## 1

**NICK.** I make shit up.

I make shit up all the time  
partly cause I like making shit up  
partly cause I'm good at it  
and partly cause  
well

I *can*.

Which is not to say that I'm oblivious to the consequences  
Christ, do I know there are consequences.

You find yourself in sticky situations, painted into corners  
And it takes the dexterity of a sharp thinking Comic book hero to  
*Unstick* yourself, tiptoe across the wet paint  
Hoping you don't leave a trail of painted toe prints,  
Or if you do,  
that they're faint enough so no one will notice.

I'm thinking about this right now

Cause

Well

I find myself in one of those sticky situations

Situation I'll have to muster up the deepest wells of my superhero dexterity  
To get out of

Or not.

See: there's a girl lying next to me  
in my bed,

In the dark,

Here in my dorm room.

She's naked. We've just had sex.

I guess you can call her my girlfriend

Cause yes,

She's naked

She's lying next to me

And we've just had sex?

This is a new thing for me, this girl  
so you'll understand my hesitation—  
First time, you know, doing the ol'  
in out in out

and stuff.

Yeah, we've been through those cagey first conversations  
 where you talk all over each others sentences  
 But we haven't crossed that threshold,  
 where suddenly it's like  
 This one might be around for a spell, she's shared such and such  
 I've shared such and such  
 We're not talking over each other's sentences anymore

All the stuff that adds up to  
*Intimacy.*

Nope. We haven't gotten there yet.

Nope. We're in the middle of the post-first-time-humping awkward silence.  
 And let me emphasize that this post-first-time silence is incredibly meaning-  
 ful—

The whole future of the relationship hovers over this silence  
 Like a promise  
 Like a threat.

We could start talking and find out that we do in fact have all the things we  
 imagined we had in common

**MOLLY.** My dad's a total dick.

**NICK.** Yours too?

**MOLLY.** Oh, you don't know dick until you've met my dad.

**NICK.** Or she could put out her cigarette,  
 grab her panties off the floor,  
 Slip on her jeans and t-shirt and say

**MOLLY.** Yeah, that was nice. Um.

Give me a call some time— I mean I'm really busy the next month or so?  
 but yeah.

See ya.

**NICK.** Or she could finish up her cigarette  
 And fall asleep

**MOLLY.** (*Yawn.*)

**NICK.** But she doesn't do any of those things. No.  
 What she does do—

She extends her index finger,  
 Presses the tip of it against my Adam's Apple,  
 Drags it slowly down my neck  
 Over my ribs  
 Over my left nipple  
 And down down down  
 In the direction of my crotch.

When at a loss for words, why not start bumping uglies again, right?  
 And so her index finger is slowly making its way down towards my  
*Pubis*,  
 All suggestive,  
 when she comes to an abrupt stop.  
 Just above the belly button,  
 Where she notices my skin  
 Is no longer the smooth,  
 Post-adolescent torso,  
 Where the tip of her finger finds a speed bump.  
 A pink strip of raised skin a few inches above my belly button  
 A quarter inch thick  
 About three-and-a-half inches long.  
 Yes, her finger stops at this sudden change in the geography of my skin.  
 Tentatively, she traces a line along the length of it.  
 Then, even more hesitant, she explores the rest of my abdomen  
 She feels other pink speed bumps, of different sizes and angles.  
 Some three inches  
 Some an inch  
 Some just thin wisps.

**MOLLY.** What are these?

**NICK.** And that's when time stops  
 And I feel the familiar sensation—  
 Sweat glands juicing up,  
 A hardening between my legs  
 That low-grade migraine  
 When I'm like an atom in a particle accelerator  
 And the world around me slows like it's moving through peanut butter.

**MOLLY.** Come on Nick, what are these?

Nick?

Nick?

**NICK.** Do I tell her?

Or do I let my comic book dexterity get me out of this one.

In other words,

do I tell her the truth

Or do I do what I do so well:

Make some shit up.

## 2

**NICK.** The question the choice the question the choice the question the  
 choice

**MOLLY.** What are these?

**NICK.** What are these?

**MOLLY.** Nick, can you hear me? What are these?

**NICK.** Do I tell the truth?

**MOLLY.** Nick

**NICK.** Or do I make shit up.

**MOLLY.** Nii-ick

**NICK.** The low-grade migraine, sweat glands juicing up, a hardening between my legs

**MOLLY.** Earth to Nick. Do you copy?

**NICK.** Me speeding up

**MOLLY.** What are these

**NICK.** The air taking on the consistency of peanut butter

**MOLLY.** NICK!

**NICK.** The question the choice the question the choice  
Launches me backward in time.

To when I was fourteen

Period in my life where I was

living according to a theory I call

The Universal Theory of the Gullibility Threshold—

Or U.T.G.T., or even better, G.T. for short.

The theory organizes the chaos of twenty-first century life into a simple, manageable model:

Everyone has a gullibility threshold,

Everyone at some point will come to recognize

That the wheelbarrow of caca they're being fed

Is in fact a wheelbarrow of caca. Nothing more. Nothing less.

The G.T. works on a scale of 1 to 10.

At the bottom of the scale, you have your ones.

The ones don't even bother taking a swallow of the caca,

they know it's caca

They can smell it a hundred miles away.

Their healthy skepticism becomes a cancer:

They end up paranoid conspiracy nut shut-ins

Thinking everything is caca.

"The world is round."

**MALE NETIZEN.** No it's not. You're fucking with me.

**NICK.** The sky is blue.

**MALE NETIZEN.** That's just an illusion man.

**NICK.** Now most people fall in the middle of the scale—

The fours, fives and sixes.

They'll give the wheelbarrow of caca the benefit of the doubt,

But then they'll get wise.

But the top of the scale you have your tens.

The suckers who'll gorge themselves on the caca

Repeat over and over,

"Yum, Yum, tastes just like chicken

can I have seconds, can I have thirds."

And when the wheelbarrow is empty,

They'll eat their own caca 'cause they're addicted.

The tens are those girls that collect unicorns

and draw rainbows on their biology class notebooks.

They're the ones who end the day with their wallets empty

Cause they believe every sob story they're told by every homeless person they meet on the street.

**CHANGE HUSTLER.** Hey, you got a twenty? I'm not like this, I don't do this, *ever*. It's just my husband? He just got back from Iraq? and he's like all messed up in the head? He's at the VA hospital up in Sacramento. And he spent his last disability check on crack? I don't have any money to get on the bus to Bakersfield? to pick up our kids? Who are staying with their grandmother who's deaf and on dialysis and can't drive cause the repo man got her car? And she can't keep them for another night cause her boyfriend is crazy and doesn't want the kids around the house no more so I got to go get them then go get my husband so we can go find a place to live? If you give me your phone number? I'll call you so I can pay you back. Can you help me out?

**NICK.** Yes, the tens are rare. But they do exist.

Adam fell into that category.

**ADAM.** I'm not gullible.

**NICK.** Adam was a perfect 10.

**ADAM.** I am not gullible.

**NICK.** A perfect 10. Or so he seemed.

Which was strange...

How do you account for a perfectly average sixteen year old

From southern California

Having a G.T. of 10?

You could write him off and say he was just stupid

**ADAM.** I'm not stupid.

**NICK.** But that would've been unscientific.

To get to the bottom of the mystery of Adam's existence

You gotta start with the question:

How did you get to be so gullible?

Did no one ever kick the scoop off your ice cream cone for no reason?

Was your backyard a Garden of Eden under the ever-present California sun?

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# **MR. AND MRS.**

## **by Julie Marie Myatt**

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## BIOGRAPHY

Julie Marie Myatt's play *My Wandering Boy* premiered at South Coast Repertory in April, 2007 and was featured in the 2007 Summer Play Festival in New York City. Her play *Boats on a River* premiered at the Guthrie Theater in May, 2007. *Welcome Home, Jenny Sutter* will premiere at Oregon Shakespeare Festival in early 2008, and will later tour to the Kennedy Center. *The Sex Habits of American Women* was produced by the Guthrie Theater, Signature Theatre in Arlington, VA, and Synchronicity Performance Group, and premiered at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco. Her work has been developed and/or seen at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Seattle Rep, LAByrnth Theater Company, and A.S.K Theater Projects, among others. She received a Walt Disney Studios Screenwriting Fellowship, a Jerome Fellowship at the Playwrights' Center, and a McKnight Advancement Grant. She is a member of New Dramatists. Her other plays include *August is a thin girl*, *Alice in the Badlands* and *49 Days to the Sun*.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Mr. and Mrs.* premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2007. It was directed by Jessica Burgess with the following cast and staff:

DEBRA .....Maurine Evans  
STEVEN .....Mark Stringham  
Scenic Designer ..... Paul Owen  
Costume Designer..... Susan Neason  
Lighting Designer..... Paul Werner  
Sound Designer ..... Benjamin Marcum  
Properties Designer ..... Doc Manning  
Fight Director .....Lee Look  
Stage Managers ..... Michael D. Domue, Debra Anne Gasper  
Production Assistant.....Melissa Miller  
Dramaturg ..... Joanna K. Donehower  
Assistant Dramaturg..... Diana Grisanti

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

DEBRA  
STEVEN

# MR. AND MRS.

**MALE VOICE.** (*Offstage.*) Ladies and gentlemen, I proudly present you, Mr. and Mrs.—

(*Crowd claps and cheers offstage.*)

(*A band plays, "At Last," offstage.*)

(*DEBRA and STEVEN enter holding hands and begin to dance. She is at least a foot taller than him. They both have had more than a few wedding toasts/drinks. They smile and a FLASHBULB goes off to capture the smile.*)

(*Flashbulbs will continue to go off throughout the play, and they will stop to smile just at the right moment for the picture, and continue dancing until the end.*)

**DEBRA.** I need to tell you something, Steven—oh, you've got something in your teeth, sweetheart. Right there. To the left. Yeah. There, you got it. I think it was a poppy seed from that hideous dressing. I was a little disappointed by the salad. I couldn't taste one bit of lemon. Could you?

**STEVEN.** I don't know.

**DEBRA.** It was all lettuce, seeds and oil. Please. No one ate it.

**STEVEN.** I did.

(*SMILE/FLASH.*)

**DEBRA.** Boy, your mother sure can put them away, huh?

**STEVEN.** Yeah.

**DEBRA.** No wonder she insisted on the open bar. My father really wasn't happy about that, you know. He doesn't drink.

**STEVEN.** Or smile.

**DEBRA.** This was a great expense for him. This wedding. It was all extremely extravagant for him.

**STEVEN.** Napkins are extravagant?

**DEBRA.** They don't grow on trees.

(*SMILE/FLASH.*)

I thought the ceremony was nice, didn't you?

**STEVEN.** Uh huh.

**DEBRA.** Your vows were lovely. Thank you.

**STEVEN.** You're welcome. So were yours.

**DEBRA.** Really? I wanted to surprise you—

(*SMILE/FLASH.*)

**STEVEN.** Though I think it's pronounced "eternity," not "entirety."

**DEBRA.** Really?

**STEVEN.** Yes.

**DEBRA.** Are you sure?

**STEVEN.** Positive.

*(SMILE/FLASH.)*

**DEBRA.** Steven, I need to tell you—

*(SMILE/FLASH.)*

Of course this is very difficult for me, but I can't go another minute without being completely honest with you—

*(SMILE/POSE/FLASH.)*

This day has been so emotional and meaningful—

*(SMILE/FLASH.)*

And you look so nice in your tux.

**STEVEN.** Thank you.

*(SMILE/FLASH.)*

**DEBRA.** I married you for your money.

*(SMILE/FLASH.)*

Steven?

**STEVEN.** Yes.

**DEBRA.** Did you hear me?

**STEVEN.** You married me for my money.

**DEBRA.** Well, what do you think, sweetheart? Are you devastated?

*(SMILE/FLASH.)*

**STEVEN.** I married you for your looks.

*(SMILE/FLASH.)*

**DEBRA.** What?

**STEVEN.** What?

**DEBRA.** I thought you married me because you loved me.

**STEVEN.** Really?

**DEBRA.** Yes.

**STEVEN.** What gave you that impression?

**DEBRA.** The engagement ring, I suppose.

*(SMILE/FLASH.)*

Do you love me?

**STEVEN.** Do you love me?

**DEBRA.** I don't hate you.

**STEVEN.** That's a relief.

**DEBRA.** But I just assumed. I guess I assumed—

*(SMILE/FLASH)*

I thought you were infatuated with me.

**STEVEN.** Infatuated?

**DEBRA.** Yes.

**STEVEN.** That's an awfully strong word.

**DEBRA.** What word would you use?

**STEVEN.** I don't know—

**DEBRA.** Head over heels?

**STEVEN.** No.

**DEBRA.** Enamored?

*(SMILE/DIP/FLASH)*

**STEVEN.** No.

**DEBRA.** Smitten?

**STEVEN.** The sex is terrific.

**DEBRA.** Thank you.

**STEVEN.** But beyond that—

*(SMILE/FLASH)*

*(Silence)*

**DEBRA.** Beyond that...?

**STEVEN.** What?

**DEBRA.** Beyond the sex?

*(Silence)*

Am I that hard to describe? ... Is it because I'm mysterious? Intimidating—

**STEVEN.** You're a little dull.

**DEBRA.** Dull?

*(SMILE/FLASH)*

**STEVEN.** You're a little limited in the things you like to talk about.

**DEBRA.** I beg your pardon. I like to talk about a lot of things.

**STEVEN.** Like what?

**DEBRA.** The world.

**STEVEN.** What about it?

**DEBRA.** I have a lot of interests. And I am passionate about issues, Steven. Issues are very important to me.

**STEVEN.** Dieting is not an issue.

*(SMILE/FLASH)*

**DEBRA.** Many people struggle with dietary issues, Steven. Food is a major issue. Major.

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# **I AM NOT BATMAN.**

## **by Marco Ramirez**

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## **BIOGRAPHY**

Marco Ramirez is a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. His plays have been produced at City Theatre's Summer Shorts, the New York International Fringe Festival (FringeNYC), and the Humana Festival of New American Plays. He is the two-time winner of the Latino Playwriting Award at the Kennedy Center's American College Theatre Festival, and recently received a commission to write a full-length play for the Kennedy Center's Educational Theatre Program. He is currently working on two full-length plays: one is about a giant, the other is about a werewolf.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

*I am not Batman.* received the 2007 Heideman award from the Actors Theatre of Louisville. It premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2007. It was directed by Ian Frank with the following cast and staff:

A BOY .....	Phil Pickens
A DRUMMER .....	Zdenko Slobodnik
Scenic Designer .....	Paul Owen
Costume Designer.....	Susan Neason
Lighting Designer.....	Paul Werner
Sound Designer .....	Benjamin Marcum
Properties Designer .....	Doc Manning
Fight Director .....	Lee Look
Stage Managers .....	Michael D. Domue, Debra Anne Gasper
Production Assistant.....	Melissa Miller
Dramaturg .....	Joanna K. Donehower
Assistant Dramaturg.....	Diana Grisanti

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

A BOY

A DRUMMER

# I AM NOT BATMAN.

*Sudden drumming, then quiet. Lights up on a BOY, maybe 7, maybe 27, wearing a hooded sweatshirt. He looks out directly before him, breathing nervously. A DRUMMER sits behind a drum set placed in the middle of the stage, in some kind of silhouette. The BOY is excited, but never gets ahead of himself.*

**BOY.** It's the middle of the night and the sky is glowing like mad radioactive red. And if you squint you could maybe see the moon through a thick layer of cigarette smoke and airplane exhaust that covers the whole city, like a mosquito net that won't let the angels in.

*(LIGHT SNARE DRUMMING.)*

And if you look up high enough you could see me. Standing on the edge of a eighty-seven story building.—

*(Thick steam shoots out of some pipes behind him—)*

—And up there, a place for gargoyles and broken clock towers that have stayed still and dead for maybe like a hundred years—up there is *me*.

*(DRUMS.)*

And I'm freakin' *Batman*.

*(CYMBAL.)*

And I gots Bat-mobiles and Bat-a-rangs and freakin' Bat-caves like for real, and all it takes is a broom closet or a back room or a fire escape, and Danny's hand-me-down jeans are gone.

*(BOOM.)*

And my navy blue polo shirt?—

*(—BOOM—)*

—The one that looks kinda good on me but has that hole on it near the butt from when it got snagged on the chain-link fence behind Arturo's but it isn't even a big deal 'cause I tuck that part in and it's like all good?—

*(—BOOM—)*

—*that* blue polo shirt?—

*(—BOOM—)*

—It's gone too. And I get like, like transformation-al.

*(BOOM. SNARE.)*

And nobody pulls out a belt and whips Batman for talking back—

(—*SNARE*—)

—Or for *not* talking back,—

(—*SNARE, CRASH*—)

And nobody calls Batman simple—

(—*SNARE*—)

—Or stupid—

(—*SNARE*—)

—Or skinny—

(—*CYMBAL*—)

—And *nobody* fires Batman's brother from the Eastern Taxi Company 'cause they was making cutbacks, neither, 'cause they got nothing but respect, and not like *afraid*-respect. Just like *respect*-respect. 'Cause nobody's afraid of you.

'Cause Batman doesn't mean nobody no harm.

(*BOOM.*)

Ever.

(*SNARE, SNARE.*)

'Cause all Batman really wants to do is save people and maybe pay Abuela's bills one day and die happy and maybe get like mad famous. For real.

...And kill the Joker.

(*DRUMS.*)

Tonight, like most nights, I'm all alone. And I'm watching... And I'm waiting...

Like a eagle. Or like a—no, yea, like a eagle.

(*The DRUMS start low but constant, almost tribal.*)

And my cape is flappin' in the wind ('cause it's freakin' long), and my pointy ears are on, and that mask that covers like half my face is on too, and I got like bulletproof stuff all in my chest so no one could hurt me and nobody—*nobody*—is gonna come between Batman,

(*CYMBAL.*)

and Justice.

(*The SLOW KICKS continue, now there are SHORT hits randomly placed on the drum set. They somehow resemble city noises.*)

From where I am I could hear everything.

(*The DRUMS build, then STOP.*)

Somewhere in the city there's a old lady picking Styrofoam leftovers up outta a trash can and she's putting a piece of sesame chicken someone spit out into her own mouth.

(*SNARE*)

And somewhere there's a doctor with a whack haircut in a black lab coat trying to find a cure for the diseases that are gonna make us all extinct for real one day.

(*SNARE. SNARE*)

And somewhere there's a man, a man in a janitor's uniform, stumbling home drunk and dizzy after spending half his paycheck on forty-ounce bottles of twist-off beer and the other half on a four hour visit to some lady's house on a street where the lights have all been shot out by people who'd rather do what they do, in *this* city, in the dark.

And half a block away from JanitorMan there's a group of good-for-nothings who don't know no better waiting to beat JanitorMan with rusted bicycle chains and imitation Louisville Sluggers, and if they don't find a cent on him—which they won't—they'll just pound at him till the muscles in their arms start burning, till there's no more teeth to crack out.

But they don't count on me.

(*The BOY becomes proud, stands up straight.*)

They don't count on no dark knight (with a stomach full of grocery store brand macaroni-and-cheese and cut up Vienna sausages),

'Cause they'd rather believe I don't exist,

(*CYMBAL. The DRUMS start to build slowly again. The steam comes out thicker and thicker.*)

And from eighty-seven stories up I could hear one of the good-for-nothings say "Gimmethecash" real fast (like that) just "Gimmethefuckingcash" and I see JanitorMan mumble something in drunk language and turn pale and from eighty-seven stories up I could hear his stomach trying to hurl its way out of his Dickies.

So I swoop down like mad fast and I'm like darkness. I'm like SWOOSH—

(—*A LIGHT DRUMROLL*—)

—And I throw a Bat-a-rang at the one naked lightbulb—

(—*Light CYMBAL*—)

—And they're all like "whoa-motherfucker-who-just-turned-out-the-lights?"—

(*Silence. The BOY breathes, re-enacting their fear, the largest and lowest CYMBAL builds slowly throughout this.*)

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THE NEXT PAGE.**

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# THE AS IF BODY LOOP

## by Ken Weitzman

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## BIOGRAPHY

Ken Weitzman's plays have been presented and developed at Atlantic Theater Company, Arena Stage, New York Stage and Film, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Playwrights Horizons, The Mark Taper Forum, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Florida Stage, Bay Area Playwrights Festival and New York's Summer Play Festival. He has received commissions from Arena Stage, the Alliance Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, and South Coast Repertory. Prizes include the 2003 L. Arnold Weissberger Award for his play *Arrangements*. Mr. Weitzman received his M.F.A. from University of California, San Diego and has taught playwriting at University of California, San Diego; Emory University; La Jolla Playhouse; The Old Globe; Playwrights Project; and Young Playwrights, Inc. Previously, Mr. Weitzman wrote and produced sports documentaries and narratives for television.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*The As If Body Loop* premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2007. It was directed by Susan V. Booth with the following cast and staff:

AARON.....	Marc Grapey
SARAH.....	Kristen Fiorella
GLENN.....	Josh Lefkowitz
ATTIC LADY.....	Jana Robbins
MARTIN.....	Keith Randolph Smith
Scenic Designer.....	Paul Owen
Costume Designer.....	Christal Weatherly
Lighting Designer.....	Deb Sullivan
Sound Designer.....	Benjamin Marcum
Properties Designer.....	Doc Manning
Fight Director.....	Lee Look
Production Stage Manager.....	Paul Mills Holmes
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Michael D. Domue
Dramaturg.....	Julie Felise Dubiner
Assistant Dramaturg.....	Cara Pacifico
New York Casting.....	Cindi Rush Casting
Chicago Casting.....	Adam Belcuore
Directing Assistant.....	Kathi E. B. Ellis

Originally commissioned by Arena Stage, Washington, D.C. (Molly Smith, Artistic Director, Stephen Richard, Executive Director.)

*The As If Body Loop* was also read and developed at the UCSD Baldwin New Play Festival, New York Stage and Film, Steppenwolf Theatre Company, Black Dahlia Theatre and Playwrights Horizons.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

The siblings:

Aaron: the oldest. 35 or so.

Sarah: the middle. 32 or so.

Glenn: the youngest. 24 or so.

Attic Lady: their mother. Mid 50s.

And:

Martin: 40s.

## **TIME**

On and around Christmas, 2002

## **PLACE**

Philadelphia, Queens, and Manhattan

The set should be spare. No attempt at realism.

All spaces must easily flow into one another, as each scene should. Two rolling chairs will become a car or a train. They re-configure themselves around the set. Nothing should stop the speed and flow of the play.

## **A NOTE ON PERFORMANCE STYLE**

Characters should be invested, not made fun of. The play works best if a hyper urgency, an urgent pitch drives all intentions. Big stakes for even seemingly small things (which is where much of the comedy comes in).

## **A NOTE ON PUNCTUATION**

...at the end of a sentence means the character does not finish his/her sentence. Not because of being interrupted but because he/she is unable or chooses not to say the words. Or that the rest is implied.

— means he/she is cut off by the other character.

/ indicates where dialogue overlaps.

# THE AS IF BODY LOOP

## Act 1

AARON's office at NFL Films. Equipment for video editing. A computer console and TV monitor. Football paraphernalia around it, as well as a ridiculous number of bottles of Tums, Pepto Bismol, Maalox, Beano, Immodium—all at least half empty. On the floor, several boxes are strewn about, clothes and toiletries stuffed sloppily inside them. One larger box has a pillow and blanket.

At rise, AARON stands or, rather, tries to remain standing as he grips a high-back desk chair with one hand and his stomach with the other. Pain. He grits his teeth and fights to mount his big comeback speech—it is part mantra, part poetry. Each word or phrase is like a hard-fought rung on a ladder he climbs to lift himself back up.

**AARON.** Okay. Okay. Okay.

Uh, uh, Emmitt Smith. Emmit Smith.

1994.

Season

finale

against

the Giants.

Separates

his shoulder.

First half.

Comes back

to play

the fourth quarter.

Ends with 168

rushing yards,

Cowboys victory.

*(A bit better.)*

Donovan McNabb. Donovan McNabb.

Week 11.

On a broken ankle,

throws

Four

touchdown

passes.

Four.

*(The clincher, pumped up.)*

Ronnie Lott. (*Savors it.*) *Ronnie Lott.*

1985.

Catches his pinky finger

in a player's facemask.

Doctors recommend

surgery

to repair it.

Instead

Lott

has them

amputate

the darn thing

above the knuckle.

Doesn't. Miss. A. Down.

*(Revived, inspired, his mission statement.)*

*I love Football!*

Football is America.

The frontier mentality.

Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.

*(On this, AARON straightens. Gingerly, he lets go of the chair and of his stomach. Relief. He stands there a beat, pleased. Then his face changes. Abruptly, he runs off to the bathroom. While he's gone, SARAH emerges from the dark. She stands on the periphery, watching. She is raw, panic churning inside her. AARON returns. He doesn't see SARAH. AARON picks up his remote and faces the monitor. A big breath.)*

**AARON.** Okay Aaron, get back in the game now. Back in the game.

Can't let the team down because of two little trips to the john.

**SARAH.** Five.

**AARON.** (*Startled.*) Jesus Christ!

**SARAH.** No, Sarah your sister.

**AARON.** You scared the crap out of me.

**SARAH.** Literally. Sorry, bad joke. I've been doing that. It's...it's not good.  
Hi.

*(She rushes to AARON and hugs him, holding on for dear life.)*

**AARON.** (*A creeping feeling of worry.*) Sarah, what are you doing here?

**SARAH.** I came for a visit. New York to Philly. Only two hours.

**AARON.** Don't you have work?

**SARAH.** I do. Yes. Yes I do. Is it cold in here? I'm cold. Are you cold?

**AARON.** No.

**SARAH.** I've been really cold lately.

*(She burrows back in to AARON.)*

**AARON.** Sarah, what are you doing here?

**SARAH.** I love what you've done with the place. Box motif.

**AARON.** (*Covering unconvincingly.*) I've been working a lot.  
Deadlines.

So I spent a few nights here in the office.

Karen's...fine with it.

(*A beat, then upbeat to change the topic.*)

Hey, check out the monitor. I'm doing a piece on the Packers. For ESPN.  
You love the Packers.

**SARAH.** I like that thing they do. After the touchdown, when the player jumps up towards the stands and the fans all hold him up.

**AARON.** The Lambeau Leap.

(*AARON hits a key to bring up an image.*)

There it is.

**SARAH.** (*She studies the image.*) Funny. Lately I feel the reverse of that. Like a whole stadium has jumped on me, and it's just me holding them all up.  
(*Abruptly singing/shouting.*) DECK THE HALLS WITH BOUGHS OF HOLLY, FA-LA-LA-LA-LA, LA-LA-LA-LA.

(*Tries to cover.*)

Almost Christmas.

**AARON.** About a month.

**SARAH.** (*Dread.*) About a month to Christmas.

**AARON.** Naughty Jews that we are, celebrating it.

**SARAH.** Well, we're really just Jew-*ish*.

Told you. Bad jokes.

(*Abruptly.*)

You'll be back in New York?

**AARON.** That's a good one.

**SARAH.** Oh.

(*Confused.*)

Are we...we're not going then?

**AARON.** Going where?

**SARAH.** To the apartment.

**AARON.** Whose?

**SARAH.** You know. Dad's.

**AARON.** Wow, the jokes get worse and worse.

**SARAH.** Did I make a joke?

(*Panicked when AARON doesn't answer.*)

Did I?

**AARON.** Considering he's been dead for fifteen years?

(*SARAH sits, disoriented.*)

**AARON.** Sarah?

**SARAH.** Sorry, I...sorry. I've...I've been a little forgetful lately. More than a little I guess.

I've had to increase my patient load, for funding purposes, to justify my grant. And it, well, it hasn't made me a very good social worker lately. That's an understatement actually.

I've been forgetting the details. Of my patients. Their most basic biographical details. I take home my notes, the intake forms, but the information, I can't...pull it up.

"Must not be that important then." Right? That's what people say when you can't recall something. A patient said it when—I went blank during a session. "Must not be that important to you then." But he was wrong. It's really the opposite. The things that are *most* important, those are what we FROSTY THE SNOWMAN, WAS A JOLLY HAPPY SOUL. WITH A CORNCOB PIPE AND A...

*(She stops, seeing AARON's look.)*

This is the other thing that's been happening. In the middle of a session, sometimes the middle of a sentence, I break out into song, a Christmas song to be exact. Are you really telling me you're not cold, it's freezing in here!

*(AARON grabs his NY Jets ski hat and scarf, and puts them on SARAH.)*

**AARON.** Sarah, it's time that you quit that job.

**SARAH.** What? No.

**AARON.** It's a burnout profession, and you are obviously burnt out.

**SARAH.** I only got the grant last January.

**AARON.** Time enough.

**SARAH.** I can't quit.

**AARON.** Sarah—

**SARAH.** Do you remember your Hebrew alphabet?

**AARON.** My what?

**SARAH.** *(Rises.)* Your Hebrew alphabet.

**AARON.** I never learned my Hebrew Alphabet. Your big brother vandalized the rabbi's pulpit instead, got expelled from Hebrew School. Remember?

**SARAH.** Well anyway, there are these two letters. Lamed and Vuv. Lamed is 30, numerologically, and Vuv is 6. Together they're 36. That's what the Lamed Vuv are. The 36. Have you heard of them?

**AARON.** Israeli rock band.

**SARAH.** Hebrew Legend. I recently read about it. It says that, at any given time, there are 36 people on Earth, chosen at birth, by God, to carry all the pain of the world.

**AARON.** Sarah—

**SARAH.** I know, I know what you're thinking. I had the same thought. 36? That seems hardly enough. I mean back in biblical times, maybe. How many people were around then? Fifty? But now, I mean baby boomers, billions in China, surely we need more than just—

**AARON.** Sarah, stop. Please.

It was a noble deed to get that grant and give free treatment to people who, who obviously needed it after—everything that happened. But it is December 2002 now.

**SARAH.** Exactly. December. Christmas. The most depressing time of the year. For instance, my one patient, what's his name, he...he...

*(The thought is gone.)*

Maybe if I share the grant, get another social worker to help with my patient load.

**AARON.** You're barely making a living now.

**SARAH.** I can't quit, I'm—

**AARON.** No, you are not!

*(Laying down the law.)*

You are not responsible. You are responsible for yourself. And your patients are responsible for themselves. That's how people get better. The only way people get better. They help themselves.

*(A beat. Suddenly about to faint, SARAH reaches to find the chair. She falls into it.)*

Sarah?!

**SARAH.** Aaron...

I think...

maybe...

I'm...sick.

**AARON.** *(Deadly serious.)* You...you are not sick. Do not say that word. Put it out of your mind.

*(SARAH says nothing.)*

You are not sick. Say it Sarah.

**SARAH.** *(Far away.)* I am not sick.

**AARON.** That's right. You're not. You are too strong now, too strong for that, that nonsense.

*(SARAH doesn't respond. AARON rushes to the phone.)*

You know what. I'm calling the clinic. Right now. Tell them you quit. Effective...

*(His stomach seizes.)*

...effective in five minutes when I get back from the bathroom.

*(AARON runs off. Pause. SARAH stares off, lost.)*

**SARAH.** *(Trance-like, eerie.)*

I'm dreaming

of a white  
Christmas...

*(SARAH rises, and drifts away. Light change. AARON returns from the bathroom.)*

**AARON.** Sarah? Sarah?

*(A cold wind whistles through. AARON moves and looks off to see if he can spot SARAH. Nothing.)*

Crap.

*(AARON goes to the phone and quickly dials. He stops himself, mid-dial, and hangs up.)*

No. We are not going to do this Sarah. We do not do this anymore. You're strong, you can take care of yourself.

*(Having talked himself down, AARON starts to go back to his desk when the phone rings. He checks the caller ID.)*

What in the world is going on here?

*(He picks up.)*

Hello Glenn.

Been a long time.

*(A light comes up on GLENN, phone to his ear. He tries to speak but he can't. AARON, and what he must tell him, makes GLENN too nervous. A beat. AARON speaks calmly, perhaps overly so which betrays the impatience that runs beneath it.)*

Start with hi.

**GLENN.** Hi. Aaron.

**AARON.** Hi Glenn.

**GLENN.** Uh...how's your stomach?

**AARON.** My stomach is fine Glenn.

**GLENN.** I only ask because, well, we thought...maybe you felt it.

**AARON.** Felt what Glenn?

**GLENN.** The disturbance. A major one Aaron. It's—macrocosmic.

**AARON.** Macrocosmic. Really? Do tell. Go ahead.

**GLENN.** It's, well it's like...it's kind of hard to explain exactly. *(Quickly.)*

Can you come out to the house?

**AARON.** The loony bin? No. Never.

**GLENN.** But—

**AARON.** Thanks for calling Glenn, talk to you—

**GLENN.** *(Quickly.)* Sarah's here.

**AARON.** Where?

**GLENN.** *(Tentative.)* At the house.

You're mad, I knew you'd be mad.

**AARON.** I'm not mad. I would be mad if I thought Sarah was actually there. But she's not.

**GLENN.** She is.

**AARON.** She was just here Glenn.

**GLENN.** Where?

**AARON.** In my office.

**GLENN.** In Philadelphia?

**AARON.** (*Sitting at his desk.*) Very good Glenn. That's where my office is. Philadelphia. Which is how I know Sarah isn't back in New York right now.

**GLENN.** She is.

(*AARON sits at his monitor and resumes editing while he talks.*)

**AARON.** Look Glenn, I know you have a different concept of time—and space—and matter, but—

(*AARON stops suddenly.*)

That's not the Packers. What happened to the...

(*He peers closely at his computer.*)

That, that can't be right.

**GLENN.** Aaron?

**AARON.** My computer, it says...today's the 18<sup>th</sup>?

**GLENN.** That depends on which Calendar you use. If you use lunar or astrological it's not. Or Hebrew. But by the Gregorian calendar, yes, December 18<sup>th</sup>. One week to Christmas.

**AARON.** (*Thrown.*) How could I...all I did was go to bathroom. It was *three weeks ago*?

**GLENN.** What was?

**AARON.** That Sarah was here in my...

(*AARON rises, suddenly alarmed.*)

Glenn. Glenn, please tell me Sarah's not really at the loony bin. Please tell me that.

(*GLENN says nothing.*)

Put her on the phone. I want to talk to her. Now Glenn!

**GLENN.** I can't. I mean she can't. Talk. I mean, she can talk, sort of.

**AARON.** English please.

**GLENN.** (*Profoundly.*) Turn your attention inward.

**AARON.** Oh no. No. That's Attic Lady talk. Tell me she hasn't—

**GLENN.** Inward Aaron.

Turn your attention inward

and you'll feel it.

You're needed.

(*GLENN quickly hangs up. Lights down on him.*)

**AARON.** Glenn? Glenn?

*(AARON raises the receiver to slam it down, but stops. He controls himself. Then, his stomach. The pain forces him into his chair. A cold wind whips through. Then a distant rumble, like a train, getting louder as it approaches. AARON's office begins to shake.)*

What the...

*(The lights flicker out. Only a single bright beam of light barrels through the darkness. A horn blast, deafening as it passes. Then...quiet.)*

Jesus Christ.

*(In the dark, an upbeat Christmas song plays. Perhaps "Jingle Bell Rock." When the lights come back up, GLENN is sitting in a chair next to AARON's. They're in a car. GLENN's driving. AARON looks ashen. Pause.)*

**GLENN.** Rough ride?

*(A beat.)*

I'm a little surprised. I figured you'd drive. You hate the train.

**AARON.** The subway. I hate the subway. This was Amtrak and the LIRR. Above ground.

*(A beat.)*

**GLENN.** Did you feel it? You look like you felt it.

*(AARON turns to GLENN.)*

The earthquake.

About an hour ago.

The train shook, didn't it?

*(AARON punches GLENN hard in the arm.)*

Ow!!

**AARON.** Do not mess with me. I'm not in the mood.

**GLENN.** I'm not messing with you.

**AARON.** They're doing track work in Trenton. They told me when I got off the train.

**GLENN.** Ok.

**AARON.** You were driving to pick me up and you heard about it on the radio. So you make up the earthquake thing to mess with me. Right? Right?

**GLENN.** No.

*(AARON punches GLENN again.)*

Ow! Stop that! What are you, Dad?

*(A beat.)*

**AARON.** Sorry.

**GLENN.** It's ok.

*(A beat.)*

**AARON.** Your face looks okay. The rash. I don't see anything.

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# THE UNSEEN

## by Craig Wright

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## BIOGRAPHY

Craig Wright's plays include *Better Late* (co-authored with Larry Gelbart) at the Northlight Theater; *Lady* (Northlight Theatre); *Grace* (Woolly Mammoth theatre); *Recent Tragic Events* (Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, Playwrights Horizons); *Melissa Arctic* (Folger Theatre); *Main Street* (Great American History Theatre); *Orange Flower Water* (Steppenwolf Theatre Company, The Edge Theatre, Jungle Theater); *Molly's Delicious* (Arden Theatre Company, Arizona Theatre Company); *The Pavilion*, dozens of productions around the country including an extended run at Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, and a Drama Desk nomination for Outstanding New Play. Mr. Wright received an Emmy nomination for his *Six Feet Under* episode *Twilight* and served as writer and producer for *Lost* and *Brothers & Sisters*. He has received several awards for his writing, including the Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding New Play and fellowships from McKnight Foundation and National Endowment for the Arts. A graduate of United Theological Seminary, Mr. Wright lives in Los Angeles.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*The Unseen* premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2007. It was directed by Marc Masterson with the following cast and staff:

WALLACE .....	Richard Bekins
VALDEZ .....	Gregor Paslawsky
SMEIJA .....	Richard Furlong
Scenic Designer .....	Michael B. Raiford
Costume Designer.....	Lorraine Venberg
Lighting Designer.....	Brian J. Lilienthal
Properties Designer .....	Doc Manning
Sound Designer .....	Matt Callahan
Stage Manager.....	Kathy Preher
Production Assistan.....	Sara Kmack
Dramaturg .....	Adrien-Alice Hansel
Assistant Dramaturg.....	Cara Pacifico
New York Casting.....	Cindi Rush Casting
Chicago Casting.....	Adam Belcuore
Directing Assistant.....	Ian Frank

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

WALLACE, male, prisoner

VALDEZ, male, prisoner

SMASH (SMEIJA), male, guard

## **PLACE**

A prison. There are two cells on stage, with a third cell, in some manner, between them.

## **TIME**

Scene One: Morning.

Scene Two: Morning, ten days later.

*To Lorraine*

“O, let my keel burst! Let me go to the sea!”

—Arthur Rimbaud, *The Drunken Boat*

# THE UNSEEN

## Scene 1

*When lights rise, WALLACE and VALDEZ are in their respective cells. Each cell is equipped with a cot, bucket, metal bowl with a lid, a spoon, and a hole in the floor. These men have been here a long time.*

**WALLACE.** (*Weary of this.*) I went to the ocean. (*After a beat.*) I went to the ocean.

*(Long pause.)*

**VALDEZ.** I win.

**WALLACE.** No. I was just taking a moment to gather my thoughts, Mister Valdez.

**VALDEZ.** Oh.

**WALLACE.** I'm still a little muddled. Forgive me.

**VALDEZ.** (*After a beat.*) They were hard on you?

**WALLACE.** (*After a beat.*) In a word?

**VALDEZ.** More than usual?

**WALLACE.** Exceedingly.

**VALDEZ.** What did they do?

**WALLACE.** Nothing novel. Nothing that would betray a mind at work. A lot of trips to the sink, of course. And then some making knots. Dogs. Shocks. And, of course, you know, the good long cry. At the end. For good measure. Twice. For the whole drooling gang.

**VALDEZ.** Rest a minute.

**WALLACE.** Thank you. Thank you for that gracious forbearance.

*(A loud buzzer goes off, followed by a brief pause, during which WALLACE carefully rearranges his bucket, bowl and spoon on the floor.)*

**VALDEZ.** Did you talk?

**WALLACE.** Of course I talked, Mister Valdez. I talked until my voice broke in pieces. I talked until my mind was raw and red from being scraped for words.

**VALDEZ.** What did you tell them?

**WALLACE.** Everything, just like always. I scoured my life, same as every night, searching the facts of my existence for what might be the secret substance they're seeking. The quicksilver or the tin. It did no good, of course. They don't believe me.

**VALDEZ.** They never believe me either. I've told them the truest things I know, the saddest, truest things, and they never believe me. My life outside, before they brought me here, was a lie by comparison.

**WALLACE.** Mine as well.

**VALDEZ.** All I've done, from the moment I got here, is tell the truth. They never believe me.

*(Pause.)*

**WALLACE.** Perhaps it's not a question of belief, anymore.

*(Brief pause.)*

**VALDEZ.** They've been harder on me too, lately. I don't know why.

**WALLACE.** I'm beginning to think there's a deterioration at work, Mister Valdez. In the system. The nature of which I am still

*(Buzzer sounds.)*

puzzling out.

**VALDEZ.** What kind of deterioration?

**WALLACE.** I'm not sure. It's exquisitely unclear. It seemed, at first, that they wanted information. Then it seemed they merely wanted submission.

**VALDEZ.** Sometimes they don't even *ask* me anything anymore, they just *do* it.

**WALLACE.** Exactly. That's my point. It's no longer clear why we're being held here, Mister Valdez, let alone systematically, how shall I put it—undone.

**VALDEZ.** It's maddening.

**WALLACE.** It's not ideal.

**VALDEZ.** I mean, what kind of place is it, Wallace, where they torture you and they don't even want to *know* anything?

**WALLACE.** I'm no longer sure. It seems there's some sort of paradoxical algorithm at work—an impossible material equation we're being pushed through, like meat through a chamber of slowly grinding gears. All of us. *(After a beat.)* If there was such a thing as an engine that ran on human agony, I'd say that's where we were. But as far as I know, no such thing exists.

*(Two loud buzzer blasts. WALLACE rearranges his "clock." Brief pause.)*

*VALDEZ seems to, all of a sudden, feel something in the air. He goes to the central-facing wall and listens.)*

**VALDEZ.** Wallace?

**WALLACE.** Yes, Mister Valdez?

**VALDEZ.** *(After a beat.)* I think...

**WALLACE.** What? *(After a beat.)* What, Mister Valdez?

**VALDEZ.** I think there's someone in between us.

**WALLACE.** There's no one in between us, Mister Valdez.

**VALDEZ.** It *feels* like there is, all of a sudden.

**WALLACE.** There's not. There never has been. There never is. There never will be.

**VALDEZ.** It feels like there is.

**WALLACE.** You've felt that way before. And we always turn out to be, in the final analysis, alone.

**VALDEZ.** I know, but—I can't explain it, Wallace, I feel very strongly all of a sudden that there IS someone in between us. Like they've put someone there, or someone's there...somehow... I feel it.

**WALLACE.** Above or below?

**VALDEZ.** Below.

**WALLACE.** (*Unconvinced.*) Very well then. Let's find out. Let's get this over with.

(WALLACE *goes to his central-facing wall and listens. Brief pause.*)

**WALLACE.** (*Calling out.*) Hello? Hello? (*After a beat.*) There's no one there.

**VALDEZ.** (*Exasperated.*) They might be asleep.

**WALLACE.** Mister Valdez...

**VALDEZ.** They might be, Wallace! When they brought me in, I slept for seven days!

**WALLACE.** Very well. Let's push to a grim conclusion. HELLO! HELLO! If you're in there, would you do us the kind favor of responding?

(WALLACE *pounds on the wall a few times. A loud buzzer blast.*)

**WALLACE.** There's no one in there, Mister Valdez. There's no one in between us, sleeping or otherwise.

(WALLACE *rearranges his "clock."*)

**VALDEZ.** I think there is, though. I feel a presence.

**WALLACE.** Well, if you feel a "presence," by all means, keep making a fool of yourself.

**VALDEZ.** (*After a beat.*) HELLO? MY NAME IS VALDEZ! AND THIS IS MY COMPATRIOT, MISTER WALLACE! WE'RE PRISONERS JUST LIKE YOU! ARE YOU IN THERE?

**WALLACE.** (*After a beat.*) See? There's no one in there.

**VALDEZ.** I think there is, though.

**WALLACE.** Well, Mister Valdez, how shall I put this? Time will tell. (*After a beat.*) If someone's in there, I'm sure he'll show himself. It is what beings do.

(*Seven odd beeps. WALLACE rearranges his "clock."*)

**VALDEZ.** It could be a woman, you know...

**WALLACE.** No it couldn't.

**VALDEZ.** But it feels like a woman. A little. To me.

**WALLACE.** Mister Valdez.

**VALDEZ.** Yes?

**WALLACE.** I have some news for you, from the tragic land of observable reality.

**VALDEZ.** What's that?

**WALLACE.** This is a prison for *men*.

**VALDEZ.** (*After a beat.*) I know it seems that way...

**WALLACE.** Have you ever seen a woman, Mister Valdez? In the entire time you've been here?

**VALDEZ.** No.

**WALLACE.** Well...

**VALDEZ.** But I've never seen anyone in the entire time I've been here—except for Smash and a few other guards. I've never even seen you.

**WALLACE.** Well all the guards are men.

**VALDEZ.** That we've met.

**WALLACE.** But the ones we've met tell us *something*

**VALDEZ.** Or they tell us nothing at all!

(*Buzzer blast. Then: two more. WALLACE rearranges his "clock."*)

VALDEZ *continues sensing the presence of the Unseen.*

**VALDEZ.** Seriously, Wallace. Think about it. This prison could be full of women. Beautiful women.

**WALLACE.** Of course.

**VALDEZ.** It's true! There could be more beautiful women in this prison than we ever saw in the world, than we ever knew even existed. And we could be the only men here, prisoner-wise. We don't really know.

**WALLACE.** It seems to me highly unlikely that this prison, aside from us, is filled with beautiful women.

**VALDEZ.** But that doesn't mean that isn't how it is.

**WALLACE.** Nicely put.

**VALDEZ.** There could be women in this prison. And children. And animals.

**WALLACE.** Children and animals?

**VALDEZ.** Yes.

**WALLACE.** Imprisoned for what?

**VALDEZ.** Childlike animal crimes.

**WALLACE.** And treated like us?

**VALDEZ.** Or better. Or far worse. Who knows? It suddenly strikes me, Wallace, this prison could go on for miles. Cell after cell, for hundreds of miles...

**WALLACE.** I've never heard of a prison that extensive.

**VALDEZ.** That doesn't mean that isn't how it is. This prison could go on forever. It could be filled with women, children, animals...

**WALLACE.** What's your point, Mister Valdez?

**VALDEZ.** My point is, we don't really know! We don't know anything. We don't really know if someone's not in there or not. (*After a beat.*) Admit it, Wallace, we don't really know the structure of this place. Or the rules. We don't really have a sense of the grand design.

**WALLACE.** You might not, Mister Valdez, you might not. But I have to say, I think I have a little sense of "the grand design." I know a *few* things.

**VALDEZ.** Like what?

**WALLACE.** Well...for instance...

**VALDEZ.** Like what? What do you really KNOW?

(*WALLACE seems reluctant to divulge his information.*)

**WALLACE.** Well, I know there's this alternating pattern of cells...

**VALDEZ.** In this very small part of the prison.

**WALLACE.** I'm assuming we live in a representative sample.

**VALDEZ.** But maybe your assumption is wrong. Maybe they make each little part of the prison different, unimaginably different from the next.

**WALLACE.** Why would they do that?

**VALDEZ.** To trick us. Into thinking we understand. Into thinking if we could just get out of our cells, we'd know our way around.

**WALLACE.** Every part different...?

**VALDEZ.** Yes.

**WALLACE.** Unimaginably different from the next...?

**VALDEZ.** Yes.

(*Buzzer. WALLACE rearranges his "clock."*)

**WALLACE.** That doesn't seem like the most cost-efficient way to design a prison.

**VALDEZ.** Maybe they don't consider costs. Maybe they have considerable resources. Maybe their resources are infinite.

**WALLACE.** Unlikely.

**VALDEZ.** Unlikely, but not impossible.

**WALLACE.** I'm not even sure the construction of a patternless structure is plausible.

**VALDEZ.** But you can't be certain that it's not. That's how *I'd* make a prison, if *I* made one, and I had infinite resources. I'd make it very predictable, locally, and then I'd make it completely patternless throughout, so no

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# THE OPEN ROAD ANTHOLOGY

by Constance Congdon, Kia Corthron,  
Michael John Garcés, Rolin Jones,  
A. Rey Pamatmat and Kathryn Walat  
with music by GrooveLily

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*The Open Road Anthology* premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2007. It was directed by Will MacAdams with the following cast and staff:

*Open Roads*, GrooveLily  
Performed by the Company

*the ride*, Michael John Garcés  
WYSS ..... Zdenko Slobodnik  
COUGHLIN ..... Sean Andries  
SALLY ..... Eleanor Caudill

*Quagmire Choir*, Kia Corthron  
MAN ..... Timo Aker  
WOMAN ..... Ashley B. Spearman  
PILOT ..... Nicole Marquez

*Ron Bobby Had Too Big a Heart*, Rolin Jones  
AMY ..... Zarina Shea  
ANYA ..... Eleanor Caudill  
CINDY DILLINGHAM ..... Katie Barton

*Live Through This (Are We There Yet?)*, GrooveLily  
Performed by Timo Aker

*on edge*, Michael John Garcés  
MARK ..... Jeff Snodgrass  
BLANCA ..... Nicole Marquez  
DAVE ..... Rafael Jordan  
STEVE ..... Mark Stringham

*Love Song without Metaphor*, GrooveLily  
SINGER ..... Maurine Evans

*Borough to Borough*, Kathryn Walat  
MELODY ..... Biz Wells

*Ain't Meat*, A. Rey Pamatmat  
WAITER ..... Jake Millgard  
CUSTOMER ..... Loren Bidner

*True North*, Constance Congdon  
HIM.....Rafael Jordan  
SHE..... Kristen B. Jackson

*The Odometer Song*, GrooveLily  
Performed by the Company

*Trade*, Kia Corthron  
WOMAN 1 .....Maurine Evans  
WOMAN 2 .....Angela Sperazza

*1260 Minute Life*, A. Rey Pamatmat  
CORA ..... Jane Lee

*Dunkin Amerika*, Kathryn Walat  
NICKI.....Katie Barton  
MICHELLE..... Emily Tate Frank  
CUSTOMER ..... Timo Aker

*Rewind*, GrooveLily  
SINGER..... Mark Stringham  
VISITOR..... Sean Andries

*The Mercury and the Magic*, Rolin Jones  
MIKE.....Michael Judson Pace  
JOE..... Zachary Palamara

*On the Road*  
Text and Lyrics by Constance Congdon  
Music by Phil Pickens  
MAN ..... Phil Pickens

*Live Through This (Are We There Yet?)* (reprise), GrooveLily  
Performed by the Company

MUSICIANS  
Drums ..... Timo Aker, Katie Barton, Mark Stringham  
Keyboard ..... Timo Aker, Jane Lee, Zachary Palamara  
Acoustic Guitar ..... Timo Aker, Phil Pickens,  
Zdenko Slobodnik, Jeff Snodgrass  
Electric Guitar ..... Phil Pickens, Zdenko Slobodnik  
Bass Guitar ..... Phil Pickens, Zdenko Slobodnik  
Violin..... Eleanor Caudill  
Trumpet.....Rafael Jordan

Saxophone ..... Zachary Palamara  
 Trombone..... Sean Andries, Biz Wells  
 Tambourine.....Zarina Shea  
 Soloists ..... Katie Barton, Maurine Evans,  
                   Emily Tate Frank, Nicole Marquez, Jake Millgard,  
                   Zachary Palamara, Zarina Shea, Ashley Spearman,  
                   Angela Sperazza, Mark Stringham and Biz Wells  
  
 Scenic Designer ..... Paul Owen  
 Costume Designer..... Susan Neason  
 Lighting Designer.....Nick Dent  
 Sound Designer ..... Benjamin Marcum  
 Properties Designer ..... Mark Walston  
 Musical Supervisor/Arranger..... Brigid Kaelin  
 Stage Manager..... Melissa Miller  
 Dramaturgs..... Adrien-Alice Hansel, Julie Felise Dubiner  
 Assistant Dramaturgs ..... Cara Pacifico, Diana Grisanti  
 Directing Assistant.....Gaye Taylor Upchurch

Commissioned by Actors Theatre of Louisville.

# THE OPEN ROAD ANTHOLOGY

## OPEN ROADS

by GrooveLily

Out where the highway sparkles like a treasure  
And every exit sings a siren song  
And the horizon stretches out forever  
The road is open  
And I am hopin'  
That's where I belong

Drivin' in a car, there's feeling that I know I would feel  
Underneath the stars, all alone, and my hands on the wheel  
Free, free, free  
And I'd never look back  
Away from it all, I'm finally on the right track

Far as I can go, see the country that I never have seen  
Out where life is slow, cars are fast and the breezes are clean  
Free, free, free  
From my little rat race  
Away from it all, I'm feeling the sun on my face  
Where the highway's not just a parking lot  
And all I need are the things I got  
And my life won't be just an afterthought  
That's where I want to go

Where the highway sparkles like a treasure  
And every exit sings a siren song  
And the horizon stretches out forever  
The road is open  
And I am hopin'  
That's where I belong

Anybody's guess what tomorrow's gonna bring it's all right  
No return address, and I feel like a bird taking flight  
Free, free, free, did I mention I'm free  
Away from it all, exactly where I should be  
And I'll say *au revoir* to the way things are  
as the white lines shoot underneath my car  
I'll go so fast and I'll go so far, I'll be there soon, I know

Where the highway sparkles like a treasure  
 And every exit sings a siren song  
 And the horizon stretches out forever  
 The road is open  
 And I am hopin'  
 That's where I belong

### the ride

by Michael John Garcés

*Characters:*

john wyss  
 peter coughlin  
 sally pickett

*wyss and coughlin have known each other since before high school. way too old to be acting this way. not geeks exactly, nothing that cool, just sort of awkward. sally is the girl they've been speculating about since they were thirteen. not necessarily pretty (in fact better if she's not), but painfully sexy; she has always been kind to them in a distant way, which makes it worse.*

*wyss and coughlin are hyped-up, jittery, an adolescent exuberance of enthusiasm given an edge by a dawning adult sense of rising stakes and diminishing time.*

**wyss.** so good.

**coughlin.** yeah?

**wyss.** so, so good.

**coughlin.** ok...

**wyss.** you trust me?

**coughlin.** yeah I trust you.

**wyss.** so good...

—

**coughlin.** what is that?

**wyss.** that? that, peter, that is a nineteen sixty-five eight cylinder two hundred and ten horsepower homemade in the u.s.a. ford mustang stud, guaranteed to put any female of the species within spitting distance into a procreative frenzy, the supreme example of this great nation's automotive imagination and ingenuity, an unholy souped-up synthesis of speed, sex and style. that is what that is. car? come on, bro. this is a ride, man. this is your ride.

**coughlin.** uh huh.

**wyss.** are you kidding me? uh huh? I'm sayin, bro, this is every red white and blue blooded american hombre's sweetest wettest dream.

**coughlin.** I haven't had a wet dream since I was eleven.

**wyss.** well I'm sorry for you.

**coughlin.** that is a beat-down hunk of steaming crap.

**wyss.** what—are you—what?

**coughlin.** what in that wildly overactive imagination whirring away in the tiny little atrophied organ that functions in place of your brain do you think we are going to do with—

**wyss.** what are you even talking about?

**coughlin.** what am I—what are we supposed to do with that...thing?

**wyss.** hit the road, I'm sayin, this is what we we talked about. the highways and byways of the great western plains and the mighty rocky mountain range, man.

**coughlin.** in that?

**wyss.** yeah, man. what? you wanted me to get a—a geo? a kia rio? huh? used? so we can look like someone's dad or, or their...grandmother. their high school principal. a guidance counselor car.

**coughlin.** oh, so, in that total heap of, of, of...of shit, john, of shit, you think we'll look like anything other than the monumental losers that we are, in that completely trashed pile of—

**wyss.** oh, man—what? you are so—no, man. that is a classic product of american engineering prowess and design artistry. what is wrong with you?

**coughlin.** does it even run?

**wyss.** look, man, I'm saying, that vehicle, that—that machine has all the self-esteem enhancement a man will ever need, bro.

**coughlin.** can...we...drive...it?

—

**wyss.** ...not yet.

**coughlin.** right.

**wyss.** but it just...all we need to do is—

**coughlin.** fine.

**wyss.** where there's a will there's a—

**coughlin.** thanks Nietzsche.

**wyss.** just, just, a little puppy love and baby talk and that itty bitty kitty will purr like a—

**coughlin.** give it back.

**wyss.** back?

**coughlin.** to whoever talked you into that catastrophe.

**wyss.** give it—what? how? I don't even know where this guy—

**coughlin.** you don't know where—

**wyss.** no.

**coughlin.** I don't care how. get my money back.

**wyss.** I already bought it. I spent it. it's gone. this is a great deal, man, I took that dude for a ride, man, that rube, he had no idea what he had.

**coughlin.** in what?

**wyss.** huh?

**coughlin.** what did you take him for a ride in since that car hasn't gone anywhere since your mother lost it in the backseat to some pimple infested third string junior varsity waterboy who defied natural selection in more ways than one?

**wyss.** my mother?

**coughlin.** how much did you spend?

**wyss.** she's good to you man.

**coughlin.** how much?

**wyss.** I—what? how—how much of the, you mean—

**coughlin.** how much.

**wyss.** how—all of it.

**coughlin.** what?

**wyss.** do you have any idea what the blue book is on this model?

**coughlin.** all of it. you spent—

**wyss.** man—all of it? all of what? all of—ok, the money, your money, all of your money was barely enough to buy gas, man, what are you—pathetic is what you are, man—maybe some nineteen eighty-five vintage subaru or some—ugh. somebody's cousin's sister's old car with three generations of baby puke all over the backseat maybe. I'm sayin, you cannot, can not, drive historic route sixty-six from tulsa to l.a. in some subaru, man.

**coughlin.** we're not going anywhere in that—

**wyss.** no, man, all we have to do is—

**coughlin.** no, this is, this is my—how could I be so—so stupid, so—

**wyss.** what?

**coughlin.** you said trust me, I should know that when you say trust I should—

**wyss.** no, man, that hick had no idea, that car was in his backyard for—it's gold, we just fix it up and—

**coughlin.** how?

**wyss.** what?

**coughlin.** we don't have any money to fix anything.

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# ***365 DAYS/365 PLAYS***

## **by Suzan-Lori Parks**

### **WHAT IS *365 DAYS/365 PLAYS*?**

On November 13, 2002, Pulitzer-Prize winner Suzan-Lori Parks got an idea to write a play a day for a year. She began that day, and finished one year later. The resulting play cycle, called *365 Days/365 Plays*, is a daily meditation on an artistic life. Some plays are very short, less than a page. Others last forever.

At the 2007 Humana Festival, Actors participated in the rolling premiere of these plays by presenting eight plays from the first half of the cycle. After the first performance, we invited a panel of people involved with the national project to reflect, conjecture and dream about the meanings of the project thus far and into the future.

Panelists included Bonnie Metzger, Producer of *365 Plays/365 Days*; Rebecca Rugg, Festival Archivist and coordinator for the 365 University hub; Ralph Peña, Artistic Director of Ma-Yi Theater Company; Jessica Posner, who coordinated the *365 Days/365 Plays* week at Wesleyan University; Kathy Sova, editor of *365 Days/365 Plays*, published by TCG and 365 actor; and Freddie Ashley, Literary Manager at the Alliance Theater and co-coordinator of the 365 Atlanta hub.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

**Suzan-Lori Parks** *365 Days/365 Plays* is a playwright, screenwriter and novelist whose plays include *Topdog/Underdog* (Public Theater), *Fucking A* (Public Theater), *Imperceptible Mutabilities in the Third Kingdom* (1990 Obie Award for Best New American Play), *The American Play* (Public Theater), *Venus* (Public Theater, 1996 Obie Award), *The Death Of The Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World* and *In The Blood* (Public Theater, 2002 Pulitzer Prize finalist), among others. Her work is the subject of the PBS Film *The Topdog/Underdog Diaries*. Her work for film and television includes *Girl 6* (directed by Spike Lee) and the adaptation of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* for Oprah Winfrey Presents. Her first novel, *Getting Mother's Body*, is published by Random House. She is currently writing the book for the Ray Charles musical (for the film producers of *Ray*). A recipient of a MacArthur Foundation "Genius" Award, Ms. Parks received the 2002 Pulitzer Prize for Drama for her play *Topdog/Underdog*.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Actors Theatre of Louisville staged the following *365 Days/365 Plays* at the Humana Festival of New American Plays in March 2007, as part of its rolling premiere. It was directed by Sean Daniels with the following cast:

*Father Comes Home from the Wars (part 1)*, November 14

Father ..... Lou Sumrall  
Mother ..... Jennifer Mendenhall

*The Great Army in Disgrace*, December 18

Jones ..... Tim Altmeyer  
Smith ..... Rafael Jordan  
Soldiers ..... Ensemble

*2 Marys*, January 3

1st Woman ..... Jana Robbins  
2nd Woman ..... Kristen Fiorella  
Man's Voice ..... Marc Grapey

*The Birth of Tragedy*, January 6

Herald ..... Rafael Jordan  
Tragedy ..... Samuel Blackerby Weible  
Chair-Man ..... Loren Bidner  
Midwife ..... Jane Lee  
Cake-bearer ..... Zarina Shea  
Dignitaries & Crowd ..... Ensemble

*If I had to Murder Me Somebody*, January 31

Speaker ..... Justin Huen

*The Butcher's Daughter (For Bonnie)*, February 13 (Again)

Butcher ..... Lou Sumrall  
Daughter ..... Angela Sperazza  
Stage Directions ..... Ensemble

*A Play for the First Day of Spring Entitled, "How do you like the War?"*, March 21

Speakers ..... Ensemble

*George Bush Visits the Cheese & Olive*, April 1

Small Man ..... Matthew Stadelmann  
Waitress ..... Zarina Shea  
Wife ..... Emily Tate Frank  
SS Chorus ..... Kristen B. Jackson, Ensemble

*Ensemble* ..... Tim Altmeyer, Heather Lea Anderson,  
Loren Bidner, Kristen Fiorella, Emily Tate Frank,  
Marc Grapey, Justin Huen, Kristen B. Jackson,  
Rafael Jordan, Jane Lee, Jennifer Mendenhall,

Jana Robbins, Zarina Shea, Jeff Snodgrass,  
Angela Sperazza, Matthew Stadelmann,  
Lou Sumrall, Samuel Blackerby Weible

and the following production staff:

Scenic Designer ..... Paul Owen  
Costume Designer..... Susan Neason  
Lighting Designer..... Paul Werner  
Sound Designer ..... Paul L. Doyle  
Properties Designer ..... Mark Walston  
Stage Managers ..... Michael D. Domue, Debra Anne Gasper  
Production Assistant..... Melissa Miller  
Dramaturg ..... Kyle J. Schmidt  
Assistant Dramaturg..... Cara Pacifico

## **WHAT IS THE 365 NATIONAL FESTIVAL?**

Make Theater. Make History. The 365 National Festival invites every theatre in the world to join a grassroots premiere of Suzan-Lori Parks' 365 Days/365 Plays. Over 600 theatres are producing the plays in Atlanta, Austin, Canada, Chicago, Colorado, Greater Texas, Los Angeles, Minnesota, New York, Northeast, San Francisco Bay Area, Seattle, Southeast, Washington DC Area, Western U.S. and in universities (365U). And the festival is growing every day.

To find out more, visit [www.365days365plays.com](http://www.365days365plays.com).  
Produced by Bonnie Metzgar and Suzan-Lori Parks  
National Coordinator, David Myers  
National Press Rep, Carol Fineman  
365U Producer, Rebecca Rugg

## The Panel Discussion

**ADRIEN-ALICE HANSEL.** This panel is the beginning of a conversation about a project that's halfway done about what may be the future of theater. We've got about 45 minutes to talk, and we'll likely run out of time to cover all of the interesting things that even these people on stage have done, much less really have a chance to start a larger conversation. So I encourage you to corner anyone up here over the course of the weekend, because we want to take advantage of all the thought and experience and conjecture that we have here in this theater right now.

**BONNIE METZGER.** Hi, everyone. My name is Bonnie Metzger, and I am the Producer of the 365 Festival, which is the simultaneous world premiere of this play cycle called *365 Days/365 Plays*. Most of what I've been doing is holding big recruitment town meetings around the country. The point of the meetings is to talk about what the project is going to be and how to participate in it. For anyone who's interested in joining, there are ways anyone can come on in any points of the process, and it'll be going on until November 2007.

But the point of this panel is to talk about this project, now that we've done 5 months of work. What is the project, and what, if anything, does it mean?

I'm just going to give a brief summary of the project to get us up to speed. Every theatre that is involved is engaged to do one week's worth of this 52-week cycle. So if you're in Atlanta at the Alliance, the Alliance would do seven plays or however many plays are written that week, and then like a relay race you'll pass it to Actors Express, the next theatre company in Atlanta. And in that way, in a region like that, you're going to do a whole 52-week cycle with at least 52 different companies there in their geographic region. That model is happening in 16 different networks simultaneously around the world, and many of them are defined regionally. New York City has its own; in the southeast, Actors Theatre is involved with ten states in that network; but there is also an international global component where we have American companies working side by side with companies from Italy and Africa and around the world.

Suzan-Lori wrote this play cycle from November 13, 2002 through November 12, 2003. These plays reflect what happened during that period of time: certain people died; we went to war. On each day she wrote a play, sometimes two, and those plays became part of that play cycle.

I read this piece and I was struck by a couple things: one, that each one felt like a daily prayer about what it is to be an artist. It made me think about the

relationship between what we do as artists and our spiritual lives, and how that plays differently in all of our lives. And the other thing I noticed, as a producer, is that these plays beg questions of form. How does one render this form into the world? And so I was inspired by both the content as well as the form to begin asking questions about the producing model of this play. I went to Suzan-Lori and asked how we can think about breaking it into as many pieces as possible and give as many people as possible the opportunity to partake. And from there, we've talked to hundreds and hundreds of really smart people and we have come up with this grassroots model where we're all involved in simultaneously creating this world premiere together.

That's the basic idea of the festival. There are numerous guiding principles that I'm going to let emerge from the people who talk about it. But one thing that you should all know is that all the performances are free. I think lots of people have different intellectual reasons for liking that. It came from the gesture of wanting this play to be a gift. Also, the cycle hearkens back to medieval play cycles, before there was a consumer entertainment identity, before we thought about art as a transaction.

With that, I'm going to ask Ralph Peña to speak from Ma-Yi in New York. Ralph's had a couple of really interesting interactions with 365.

**RALPH PEÑA.** I remember my first meeting with you and Suzan-Lori Parks at the Public Theatre, and one of the things, knowing Suzan-Lori Parks's work, I immediately asked was: Do you realize we're Asians? (*laughter*) And she immediately said, "Yes! And that's great! And I want you to do it that way." And so that was my entry point, because looking at 365 and knowing its breadth, what I wanted to do for the company was take and make it culturally specific and not whitewash the experience for a general audience in New York. So I'm going to borrow my friend Alice Tuan's word, which is lens. I wanted to give it a specific lens, and Bonnie and Suzan jumped on board and said, "Yes, that's what we want to do!" So in fact what we're doing is translating all the pieces into four different languages, which would be Japanese, Chinese, Filipino and Korean, and performing them simultaneously every single night, because I wanted to be a bridge between these different things. I wanted to be messy, I wanted it to be as open and laterally wide as possible for unity, very specifically. And that can be the kind of fulcrum from which we reach out to other people so the approach here is that in being specific, we are in fact being universal

And then my second encounter with 365 was in Nairobi, Kenya, in January, where a group of US theatre artists went to attend the World Social Forum. Bonnie, being the impresario that she is, pulled myself and Lloyd Suh, who is an Asian-American writer, and an African performer who was in the middle of the room and said, "perform a play." And there were about 150 artists,

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