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# **CANARD, CANARD, GOOSE?**

**created by the company**

**written by Steven Cosson**

from interviews, improvisations, writings,  
and other contributions by the company:

Damian Baldet, Ayşan Çelik, Maria Dizzia, Aimée  
Guillot, Anne Kauffman, Christina Kirk, Caitlin Miller,  
Jennifer Morris, Charlie Schroeder,  
Brian Sgambati, and Colleen Werthmann

**additional text by Anne Washburn**

**music and lyrics by Michael Friedman**

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## INTRODUCTION

Looking back on the creation of The Civilians' first show *Canard, Canard, Goose?* I am trying to distill exactly why immediately post-9/11 we chose to do a show about alleged geese abuse. There was no good reason. There were only circumstances, lots of bad reasons, and a deadline. As it is chronicled in the play—with great dramatic license—the making of the play was essentially a group of people stumbling ahead, using curiosity as our only guide, fueled by desperation.

The “making of” story begins when Bonnie Metzgar gave us a date to perform (November 13th, 2001) at Joe’s Pub, the Public Theater’s house nightclub. We planned out an idea for a project and set a first rehearsal, which turned out to be a few days after September 11th. With the smell of the smoldering Towers still everywhere in the city, our planned idea then seemed stupid and meaningless so we dropped it. Everything at that time was rollercoaster emotions, bizarre pronouncements from the cultural front and ominous signs from our political leaders. And perhaps because of all this confusion we decided to pursue a story with clear good guys (geese) and bad guys (Disney). Or we chose it because it offered escape from the city. Or we said yes because for whatever reason at that time this story was the right kind of stupid. The idea itself knew it was stupid, so there was no way to go but forward.

It turns out this was an ideal beginning for a theater company. Everyone was thrown into doing something new. Michael Friedman, for one, ended up writing songs for a musical for the first time. I learned many things, but perhaps most importantly I learned that The Civilians’ process requires a leap into the unknown. Just as a solitary writer needs to create with some balance between the subconscious and the rational; a collaborative approach equally needs some push to suspend the usual ways of thinking and get to the interesting stuff. I learned that somehow the play is out there already in the world; that the way to find it lay in creating circumstances in which something unexpected might happen and then trying to find the points of connection. *Canard* certainly has its rough edges, but it’s the way—like Anna Paquin—we learned to fly.

—Steven Cosson

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

TWO FRENCH GIRLS, purposeful. Mysterious. French?

BILL LISHMAN, Canadian, Inventor, Pilot, Geese trainer. Mid fifties. Grey-bearded. Pilot goggles. Exuberant and full of the wonders of the world.

MARGIE MOORE, summer worker at the Long Lake Motel. Forties. Weary.

MOTEL OWNER, owns the Long Lake Motel. Sixties. Slow. Meek.

DINER GUY, wiseacre.

BARTENDER WOMAN, from NJ. Sensible, warm, animated, casual. No frills no bullshit.

SHIRLEY, works at the bank. Fifties. Short grey hair. Butch & straightforward.

SALLY, works at the bank. Thirties. Heavy. Friendly.

MOTEL OWNER'S WIFE, middle-aged. Originally from Texas. Long Lake Motel.

ADIRONDACK HOTEL OWNER, owns the Adirondack Hotel. Short, composed, plain looking but has something of an acquired refinement that comes with being in hospitality. From Buffalo.

WILDLIFE REHAB WOMAN, middle-aged. Clean, homey tailored look.

CHARMAINE, twenties. Long Lake native. Hotel cleaner and occasional goose sitter. Really could care less about it all.

WISE SOUNDING GUY, forties. He's a pilot and he's always got something he's thinking but not saying.

WOMAN WHO WORKS WITH THE GUY WHO RENTS PLANES, works at the Marina. Late 30s. Sensibly feminine.

GUY WHO RENTS PLANES, pilot at the Marina. Late 30s. Windblown, haggard, handsome. Leans on things.

CUSTOMER AT THE OTHER BAR, forties. Up from NJ. Horse-owner. A good drinker. Tough on the outside. Mushy on the inside.

BARTENDER MAN, bartender. Tall, thin, bald, languidly effeminate. Gold chain.

BOB, former cop. Sturdy. Regular guy.

GOOSE HATING OLD GUY, park and rec guy. Carhartt.

BRUCE MACKINNON, Canadian, Avian Control Expert.

RANDALL WATT, Air Force Chicken Tester.

ANNA PAQUIN, movie star. First at 19, then at 14.

TERRY KINNEY, actor.

*Actors*

DAMIAN

BRIAN

CHARLIE

COLLEEN

AYŞAN

JENNY

AIMÉE

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The premiere of *Canard, Canard, Goose?* was produced by The Civilians (Steven Cosson, Artistic Director) at HERE Arts Center, New York City, opening on January 25, 2002. It was directed by Steven Cosson with the following cast:

Damian Baldet  
Ayşan Çelik  
Aimée Guillot  
Jennifer Morris  
Charlie Schroeder  
Brian Sgambati  
Colleen Werthmann

And the following production staff:

Set Designer ..... Louisa Thompson  
Costume Designer..... Sarah Beers  
Lighting Designer..... Gwen Grossman  
Sound Designer ..... Samuel C. Tresler  
Stage Manager..... Terence Dale  
Choreographer..... Jessica Wallenfels  
Associate Director..... Anne Kauffman  
Music Director..... Kris Kukul  
Movement ..... KJ Sanchez

# CANARD, CANARD, GOOSE?

## Scene One

*An empty stage. Sounds of morning. Someplace cold and misty at the edge of a lake. The TWO FRENCH GIRLS enter, wearing yellow raincoats and berets. They pause, honk horns, look over their shoulders and wait expectantly. Sound of goslings approach. The TWO FRENCH GIRLS move on. Sounds of wind and a small snowmobile motor. Canadian inventor BILL LISHMAN is revealed; he's flying in his ultralight airplane. He wears old-fashioned pilot goggles.*

**AN ACTOR'S VOICE.** In the air. Somewhere. In Canada. Bill Lishman.

**BILL LISHMAN.** I started flying as a hobby, you know. You dream about it as a kid just flying through the air and it was a dream of mine so I started building ultralights in my backyard. I got about a hundred acres here in Ontario, so there was plenty of room to experiment with construction.

I love to fly in the fall watchin' the leaves change, looking down at my house at the foot of the river. One day I—just by sheer coincidence—got caught up in a gaggle of ducks. Now usually when you're flyin' around, the speed of the ultralight will intimidate or scare off a bunch of birds, but I just happened to be flying at their speed about twelve, fifteen feet away from them, so we just kept pace with each other. I was behind a couple of them and one of them kept turning around to see if I was still there. It was the most amazing experience. It's what led me to start my experiments with migrating geese. I wrote a book about it, *Father Goose*. And then the Hollywood people called and turned my story into a movie. *Fly Away Home*. Now take geese. Say they've lost their leader or mother, there's no one to point them in the right direction.

*(Crudely made geese puppets appear. They fly around erratically like crudely made geese puppets who've lost their way.)*

Well I figured if I could adjust the speed of the ultralight, it's about a 50 horsepower, but if I could just tweak it a little here and there—if I could find the right speed then these birds would follow me. We could fly together.

*(Sound of a motor adjusting and then a flock of geese flying nearby. The geese puppets fly alongside BILL LISHMAN.)*

But I tell ya, there's nothing better than flying up there in a river of geese. It's really special, like being a kid again.

*(Sounds of honking builds. Wonderful honking.)*

## Scene Two

*A member of the company, COLLEEN, addresses the audience.*

**COLLEEN.** Everything that you're about to see is fact. Everything is exactly as it occurred, as we managed to remember it. Some of the fact has been edited. Names have been changed and within the company identities have been rearranged. There may have been a certain amount of reimagining. That said, I state to you, the audience, unequivocally, that the things we are talking about are either completely real or altered slightly from real events. If you doubt the truth of this statement I have just made, I say to you that you are entitled to that doubt in as much as any human being has a right to be skeptical about received information, yet I will insist that despite this entitlement, if you persist in your doubt of the reality of people, events, or facts in this show you are erroneous in that persistence.

**AIMÉE.** Meeting of The Civilians. September 23rd, 2001.

*(A scene, members of a theater company looking frazzled, numb and altogether distracted. It's Aimée's turn to report on the progress of their latest project.)*

**AIMÉE.** Pass. Aysan?

**AYŞAN.** Nada.

**AIMÉE.** Jen?

**JENNY.** Are you kidding? I can barely leave my fucking apartment.

**COLLEEN.** I have a quasi interview.

**CHARLIE.** I don't want to do a show about anything.

**BRIAN.** Quasi?

**COLLEEN.** Well, she talked to me, and I got notes.

*(DAMIAN examines a green Cheeto-like snack, a Seaweed Puff.)*

**DAMIAN.** The *amount* of seaweed in this puff will determine my willingness to eat it.

**COLLEEN.** It's a Seaweed Puff.

**DAMIAN.** If seaweed is a garnishing element, I can eat it. Otherwise I'm afraid I have to withdraw.

**COLLEEN.** What, you're a misogynist?

**DAMIAN.** I'm a—? No. Do you *mean* misogynist?

**BRIAN.** *(Helpfully.)* Because a girl bought it.

**COLLEEN.** Xenophobe. Sorry. A—something phobe, uh—fuck. What's the Latin for—

**CHARLIE.** Non-terreri-us.

**COLLEEN.** Uh...but okay tell me this. Do you genuinely not like it? Or is it more that it *scares* you.

**JENNY.** Damian, say something moving about your childhood.

**DAMIAN.** “I was very young. I was on a beach.”

**COLLEEN.** But did you know, for example, that seaweed actually *leaches* radioactivity from your body?

**BRIAN.** Get out.

(COLLEEN *feeds* AYŞAN *a seaweed puff*.)

**COLLEEN.** Body of Christ.

**AYŞAN.** Amen.

**COLLEEN.** All I’m saying is that if you can’t stand it, you can’t stand it, but if it’s just an amusing little aversion for you, you might want to rethink your stance. Also it has all these, I’m certain it has all these weird especially healthful minerals. And why not, you know? Why not be sophisticated?

**AIMÉE.** No, seriously. In case of nuclear attack?

**COLLEEN.** Uh...yes. If you’re pretty far away when it happens it might be helpful.

**DAMIAN.** In that case. I’ll give the puff a whirl.

(BRIAN *is eating something else*.)

**BRIAN.** This isn’t real cheese is it?

**JENNY.** It’s tofu cheese.

**CHARLIE.** Since when are we a vegetarian collective?

**COLLEEN.** It actually leaches radioactivity from your body. That I know. I don’t know about nuclear attack or dirty nukes or distance from the epicenter or any of that.

**BRIAN.** This cheese is really realistic.

**JENNY.** It’s tofu pepper-jack.

**BRIAN.** It isn’t bad.

**JENNY.** (*Looking at CHARLIE*;) *Someone* brought cookies last time.

**AYŞAN.** You thought it was real cheese?

**BRIAN.** Yeah. I did.

**CHARLIE.** Cookies are vegetarian.

**AYŞAN.** You are *crazy*. This tastes *nothing* like real cheese.

**CHARLIE.** Next time I’m bringing a hunk of meat. Just to make sure.

**JENNY.** (*Meaning the seaweed puffs*;) I like ’em.

**COLLEEN.** *Thank* you.

(*Pause*.)

**AYŞAN.** Wow. That was like normal conversation, almost three minutes.

**DAMIAN.** Which included irony. Not dead after all. “Pfew.”

**JENNY.** But was that irony or was it just sarcasm?

**CHARLIE.** That’s—

**BRIAN.** That's what irony means now. Basically.

*(Pause.)*

**CHARLIE.** Can we do this already?

**COLLEEN.** Sorry. I thought everyone was enjoying the “normal conversation.” Okay. So this is the 8th. And I'm up at Long Lake, which is this town upstate, this little town, on a lake. Anyway. Margie Moore at the Motel was telling me and Juergin that movie *Fly Away Home* was filmed up there, and that they trained all these geese to fly behind a light aircraft, an ultralight propeller aircraft, and basically they imprinted the little geese so that they'd think that Anna Paquin is their mother, or their goose leader, or the aircraft is their mother and after they've done this, and these geese are totally dependent on...Anna Paquin, or the plane, or both, I forget which, once they're done filming the movie they split. And they leave the geese behind. So these geese, their 'mother' is gone, their social system is fucked, and they have no leader and no concept of how to migrate. So they're all stranded there over the winter and they all die. Margie is telling us this and I'm outraged. I'm like, this is inexcusable! So I went back to my room and I wrote it down. Juergin is like 'Colleen, come on we're on vacation' and I'm all 'Disney isn't getting away with this one.' I said to Juergin 'That is the saddest fucking thing I have ever heard.'

*(The company seems to agree.)*

Okay, so here she is. This is Margie. Um, let me just look at my notes again.

*(COLLEEN prepares for a moment and then plays MARGIE MOORE.)*

**MARGIE.** You know, they shot that movie *Fly Away Home* here in Long Lake you know that movie where the little girl shows the geese the way home—with the planes? Yeah, well, you know, it was terrible, you know, those movie people came in here, raised those geese to follow planes, by imprinting them, you know, not on their mother, and then when they were done filmin' they up and deserted those geese. Yeah. And, since the geese didn't have anyone to show them the way down south they got stuck over there behind the Long Lake Diner. Yeah Hollywood up and left 'em. Just left 'em behind.

*(The company is moved by the story.)*

**JENNY.** Colleen, how many people can you fit in your station wagon?

*(Footlights. The company performs:)*

### THE CIVILIANS THEME SONG

OOOH. OOOH. OOOH.

WE'RE THE CIVILIANS AND WE'RE GONNA GETCHA.

WE'RE HERE BY THE MILLIONS, DO WE ROCK? YOU  
BETCHA.

THE CIVILIANS ARE COMING.

THE CIVILIANS ARE COMING.  
OOOH.

*(Spoken over the Oooh's:)*

We think pretty hard about stuff.  
We decide on a thing.  
We investigate stuff like timeless issues, and current events.  
We interview strangers.  
We don't use any recording devices.  
We do little and mostly inconclusive research.  
People bring snacks.  
And then...  
We make a show of it!

WE'RE THE CIVILIANS AND WE'RE GONNA GETCHA.  
WE'RE HERE BY THE MILLIONS, DO WE ROCK? YOU  
BETCHA.  
THE CIVILIANS ARE COMING.  
THE CIVILIANS ARE COMING.  
CIVILIANS. (x7)

### Scene 3: Fly Away Home

**CHARLIE.** *(Movie trailer voice:)* *Fly Away Home*

**AYŞAN.** *(Movie trailer voice:)* To attempt the incredible, you have to achieve the impossible.

*(The company tells/performs/confuses the plotline of "Fly Away Home.")*

**JENNY.** Okay, well there's this whole—

**AIMÉE.** Jeff Bridges—

**JENNY.** Daniels.

**AIMÉE.** Jeff Daniels crashes the plane and he's like: "You must go on, you must go on."

**DAMIAN.** *(Playing Jeff Daniels:)* You must go on, you must go on.

**BRIAN.** And there's this scene in the shower

**DAMIAN.** And there's this ranger

**BRIAN.** She has soap in her eyes

**DAMIAN.** He's all: "I must clip their wings."

**BRIAN.** She's surrounded by all these fledgling geese.

**DAMIAN.** *(Playing the Park Ranger:)* I'm going to clip their wiiiiings!

**BRIAN.** She's naked and crying.

**JENNY.** And an important time element.

**BRIAN.** The geese are just confused.

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT  
FROM THIS SCENE.  
THE PLAY CONTINUES ON  
THE NEXT PAGE.**

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# **GONE MISSING**

**written by Steven Cosson  
from interviews by the company\***

**music and lyrics by Michael Friedman**

**“Interview with Dr. Palinurus” by Peter Morris**

*\*Gone Missing* was created with Damian Baldet, Trey Lyford, Jennifer Morris, Brian Sgambati, Alison Weller, and Colleen Werthmann.

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## INTRODUCTION

A friend of mine's daughter once came to him in a panic and asked quite stricken, "Is this it?" She was five at the time and not necessarily so precise, so my friend asked her to clarify. "THIS," she said with a gesture meant to encompass a great deal—life, the present, reality, "All of this. Is this all there is?" And then she wept, inconsolably. Perhaps she was paraphrasing Peggy Lee's classic song of life as a series of disappointments, "Is that all there is?" Hearing this story struck a chord with me. I felt like I'd been asking myself the same question—consciously or unconsciously—since I was about...five.

I don't know if it hit me with the force of an epiphany, as it did with my friend's daughter, but somewhere around age five I realized that existence was not an infinitely expanding universe of wonder and possibility but was instead a concrete, structured daily experience of time, space and predictability (not to mention other people's horrible children). And around this time I have my first memories of genuine sadness, of feeling a sense of loss that was more than just ice cream falling on the sidewalk. This feeling told me that from now on, consciousness would be a constant struggle between the possibilities of the imaginary and the disappointment of actual living. And this grieving for lost possibilities is something that has replayed itself throughout my life in different forms. Sometimes it's attached to the breakup of a relationship. Sometimes it's the memory of a particular landscape or simply a lost object. Whatever the stimuli, the emotional experiences are largely the same, varying in intensity, but always familiar. It's a feeling of suffering but also a sensation of being awake again, back in the world, fully myself and connected to other people. It is a seeming contradiction. In this state of grief, aware of the temporary nature of all things, I somehow become fully alive again. To quote Dr. Palinurus from *Gone Missing*, "It is both a pleasure and a pain." I think that's part of why we treasure our losses despite the suffering, or more accurately, because of the suffering.

Each of us at some time has that special loss. We tell ourselves stories about it, and that at least gives an outline to the absence. Our stories provide some dotted line around the thing that's missing, the life that could have been, the love and tenderness that somehow turned into pain and anguish. In creating *Gone Missing*, I wanted to find a way into that space. I wanted to learn if the mechanics of loss and grief were significantly different in other people. Or do we instead all just have different names and objects tagged to the various holes in hearts, with the nature of the holes themselves being more or less the same? And is there a way that we as a society remember lost things that can tell us something about how we live now? Could these holes somehow make a map of absences that would describe the territory that encompasses both "all there is" and "all there might have been?"

These were some of the questions I had in mind when I began working with The Civilians to create *Gone Missing*. The rules were simple. Each company member conducted a series of interviews and listened to other people's stories about lost objects. No stories of lost people were allowed. Pets were ok. The other rule was that the thing had to have truly "gone missing," meaning that there was some question or mystery connected to the loss. A sock that disappeared in the laundry could count. An apartment that was destroyed by fire wouldn't.

Over a period of several months, the members of the company gathered stories first hand in coffee shops, at bus stops, in retirement centers. Some of the subjects were relatives, some are friends, but most were complete strangers. We also interviewed "finders," the people who have to deal with all the lost stuff. These interviews became the text for the show, and the actors of the company play the people they've interviewed. It's important to mention that as a part of this process we didn't take notes or record anything during these interviews. Whatever's spoken is committed to memory and written down later, and the words are inevitably altered somehow by the listener. So we don't identify anyone by name, as the character is not exactly them. It is an impression of them interpreted by a performer, as accurate as possible but—like all perceptions—subjective.

Responding to these interviews, composer Michael Friedman and playwright Peter Morris wrote original material resulting in the nine songs of *Gone Missing* and the radio interview between our host Teri and Dr. Alexander Palinurus, author of *Losers Weepers: A Cultural History of Nostalgia*. While the NPR-esque radio interview is a fiction, the facts are true and somehow all of these questions of loss and memory are indeed intimately connected to the life-cycle of the eel. I don't know why.

As a maker of theater, I am predisposed to being curious about other people. Perhaps it's merely schadenfreude, but I love listening to other people's problems, especially strangers. I'm fascinated by how people talk, how they move, how they tell a story. This is the basic premise behind the work of The Civilians. All of our projects begin with that first step of going outside of oneself and seriously considering the existence of another human being. It's almost always a surprising experience. When you sit down and let someone reveal themselves to you, you realize that people are never exactly what they seem. Your perceptions open up and in this moment the "possibilities of the imaginary" side of existence scores a point against the "disappointment of actual living." That's a big part of why I create our shows, to have this opportunity to get a glimpse into another person's life and remind myself that what I think I know is much, much narrower than the real phenomena of existence in all its sad, sweet, cruel and strange beauty. And hopefully, by glimpsing into other people's losses and looking at what's "gone missing,"

we might think that we in fact do not bear our various holes and hurts alone. And that perhaps this empty space we carry inside is not something that will ever be completely filled or satisfied, but it is in fact part of what it means to be alive in the world and may be a quite necessary ingredient of living compassionately. And that perhaps this is indeed “all there is.”

—*Steven Cosson*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Gone Missing* received its World Premiere by The Civilians at The Belt, New York City, October 9, 2003, and was premiered in London by The Civilians at The Gate Theatre, February 5, 2004. It was directed by Steven Cosson with the following cast:

Damian Baldet  
Maria Dizzia  
Michael Esper  
Trey Lyford  
Jennifer R. Morris  
Alison Weller

Musicians:

Andy Boroson, Piano  
Ernie Adzentoivich, Bass  
Richard Huntley, Drums

And the following production staff:

Stage Manager.....Terence Dale  
Assistant Director .....Isaac Butler  
Assistant Director .....Jonathan Spector  
Graphic Design.....Abby Weintraub  
Associate Producer ..... Hillary Cutter  
Managing Director ..... Leslie Graham  
Set Design..... Takeshi Kata  
Lighting Design ..... Thomas Dunn  
Sound Design.....Ken Travis  
Choreographer..... Jim Augustine  
Costume Design .....Sarah Beers

The play subsequently received its Off-Broadway Premiere, produced by Scott Morfee and Tom Wirtshafter at the Barrow Street Theatre, in association with The Civilians, June 24, 2007. It was directed by Steven Cosson with the following cast:

Emily Ackerman  
Damian Baldet  
Jennifer R. Morris  
Stephen Plunkett  
Robbie Collier Sublett  
Colleen Werthmann

Musicians:

Andy Boroson, Piano  
David Purcell, Drums  
Steve Gilewski, Bass  
Music Direction: Andy Boroson

And the following production staff:

General Management .....2 Step Productions  
Production Manager .....Jason Reuter  
Production Stage Manager.....Robert Signom III  
Press Representative ..... O & M Co.

For The Civilians:

Steven Cosson, Artistic Director  
Kyle Gorden, Producing Director

Additional interviews conducted by: Quincy Tyler Bernstine, Matthew Francis, Winter Miller and Charlie Schroeder.

# GONE MISSING

*The company enters. Sounds of underwater bubbles.*

**OLD MAN.** You lose something in New York, it don't come back.

**POSTER.**

Lost Dog

Please call—we miss her!

NAME IS “KIRBY”

has one eye plus red harness.

**POSTER.**

Lost Back-Pack

Valuable Contents:

2 Beanie Babies

and a toy dolphin

mostly needed back

If found please call.

**POSTER.**

Found Bird

If you think it's yours please call

This is not a picture of the actual bird

But one that looks very much like it.

**MUM.** There was the teeth. Well my mother, she had three gold teeth and they disappeared. She would leave them in a little dish, you know, she'd take them out and they disappeared.

**OLD MAN.** A ring, your wallet, my glasses—who'd want my glasses? She never lost nothin. She was a schoolteacher.

**HIS WIFE.** I never lost nothin. I had laser surgery.

**OLD MAN.** Yeah, they say it's a snap, it don't hurt, but it ain't true—

**HIS WIFE.** It ain't true. That's why I wear these glasses. I had laser surgery.

**MUM.** Well, I figured Stubby took them. To sell them. For the gold, you know. Now that I think about it...Stubby...Stubby L'Engle, not Stubby *Wood*. Stubby *Wood* is the guy Fred shot in the forehead with a bee bee gun. But I'm pretty sure Stubby *L'Engle* had a hand in the teeth.

**COP.** My first DOA—this guy had disappeared down this big elevator shaft. It was filled up with three, four feet of water. And the smell! It was something awful. His body had spread out all over the place, and it was my job to find all the parts and get them into the body bag, and I started to get (*Eyes bug out indicating “sick”*) and the guys are yelling down to me, “Hey rookie, how you doing?” and they're laughing, “your first DOA!” They're laughing. You gotta laugh.

**POSTER.**

Lost

Picture of my father sitting in a field of daffodils

Great sentimental value

If found please call.

**PEARL RING WOMAN.** Could I talk about losing a husband? Because I would certainly have a lot to say on that subject.

**OLD WOMAN.** No? You don't want to hear about people? Well, sorry honey, after you've lost as many people as I have you don't care about material things. They simply don't matter at all.

**LOONY BIN.**

"Things I have lost"

(in the loony bin 1994)

I've lost my toothbrush

my sweater

all my socks

my sense of humor

the plot

any sense of self-worth

the will to live

**GONE MISSING**

WHEN I WAS 8 I LOST MY INNOCENCE  
PLAYING DOCTOR, IT WAS TENSE, BUT I FOUND OUT  
THAT EXPERIENCE IS GREAT

WHEN I WAS 8.

WHEN I WAS 17 I LOST MY VIRGINITY  
YOU KNOW IT REALLY WOULDN'T BOTHER ME IF  
AFTERWARDS I HADN'T BEEN SO MEAN

WHEN I WAS 17.

GONE, GONE MISSING

GONE, GONE MISSING

WHEN I WAS 29 I LOST MY WAY  
MY MOTHER THOUGHT THAT I WAS GAY, BUT I THINK  
I WAS JUST WAITING FOR A SIGN

WHEN I WAS 29.

WHEN I WAS 33, I LOST MY COOL  
I WAS TEN YEARS OUT OF SCHOOL, AND AS OLD AS  
JESUS CHRIST WOULD EVER BE

WHEN I WAS 33.

GONE, GONE MISSING

GONE, GONE MISSING

WHEN I WAS 42 I LOST MY MIND  
 MY FRIENDS ALL TRIED TO BE KIND, BUT I SAW THAT  
 BEING CRAZY WOULDN'T DO

WHEN I WAS 42.

WHEN I WAS 61 I LOST THE WAR

I CAN'T RECALL WHAT IT WAS FOR BUT I REMEMBER I  
 HAD NEVER HAD SUCH FUN

WHEN I WAS 61.

GONE, GONE MISSING

GONE, GONE MISSING

GONE, GONE MISSING

GONE, GONE MISSING

(FRENCH LESBIAN *alone on stage.*)

**FRENCH LESBIAN.** Well, umm, it is kind of hazy, I keep blocking it out, but I think it was between 1993 and 1995, or it was 1993 or 1995, and I had this scarf that I had borrowed from my sister and never returned it. I loved this scarf it was an Agnes B. scarf. I don't even think she knew I borrowed it. But one night I took my girlfriend to this bar, Henrietta Hudson. I think it is on Hudson. And we had put all of our bags and things on this pool table. And then this big crowd came in after us and they took over the pool table and one of them picked up my scarf, I think it was by mistake but uhhheec, this softball dyke took my scarf. It really pisses me off that this really beautiful scarf, it was an Agnes B. scarf, fell into such uncouth hands. It like *gnaws* at me even today. You know where I picture it? Balled up with a cat on it. Or worse. In an SUV. In an SUV balled up with a cat on it. That's where it is. I hate softball. I mean I hated softball before but I hate it even more now.

(*Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beeeeeeeep.* LAURA *enters. She is leaving a message on an answering machine.*)

**LAURA.** It's Laura. Hi, um, I called Tom about this embarrassing issue and I'm now calling you. I think I left one of my pumps at PS 122 last night, but um, I'm back in Los Angeles and can't go to the theater myself. And they're like my good shoes and it's embarrassing.

(TOM *enters.*)

**TOM.** So, do you know Laura? So she was meeting with some big TV people. And she had on this pair of black Gucci pumps and a nice skirt and everything, and after her meeting we were all going out. And somewhere along that night she lost her shoe. One of her Gucci shoes, because she had changed at PS 122 because she felt overdressed. She thinks that she left the shoe in the bathroom. I think she actually lost the shoe later that night, because I think they went out drinking—

(*Beep.*)

**LAURA.** Hi, it's Laura, um I was really hoping that you could have secured the shoe before you left town but apparently you have not, so I've been working with Tom and Tom has gone back to PS 122 numerous times. And I'm leaving numerous messages for the house manager, the artistic director, the director of development to see if they have gotten their act together enough to find the shoe. Um, I am sending a packet of flyers to you, to Tom, to Big Daddy, and to Elizabeth, and I'm sending maps of where I'd like you guys to post the flyers because I'm really hoping if someone sees some—you know—one legged person wearing it—who wears a size six—that uh, it will become clear whose shoe that is and where they need to send it to in Los Angeles immediately. Um, I am working on the flyer, and I've also started an email address: [ilostmyshoe@earthlink.net](mailto:ilostmyshoe@earthlink.net). So, um, I don't know if you have gone back to PS 122 or not—no one there returns my calls and it's really depressing—but I'm really hoping the flyers will stir up some leads!

**TOM.** Laura sent me jpegs of the shoe and she wanted me to post them around PS 122. "Lost black Gucci pump." But it was just a basic black pump.

*(LAURA and TOM exit. A young man who works at a Korean deli enters.)*

**KOREAN DELI YOUNG MAN.** My kitten? No, someone took it. Stole it. It had Korean name. Nabi, it means butterfly. I am very mad at the person who took Nabi. She was my best friend and I was always so happy to see her. I don't think I can get another cat now. I just miss her running around here.

*(A woman from the deli enters, young man exits.)*

**KOREAN DELI WOMAN.** What? Oh, the cat. No, no. Cat gone away. I gave it to friend. In deli, it ran around, made me very angry. Always in around food, no good. Now it is in Queens with my friend. It had Korean name, Nabi. It means butterfly so it fly away.

### THE ONLY THING MISSING

ILL ADMIT I HAVE A PROBLEM HOLDING ONTO  
THINGS

A SOCK, A BOOK, A CLOCK, A LOOK, A CHANCE.

AND THE MOMENT THAT A FELLA

LENDS ME HIS UMBRELLA

IT'S JUST ANOTHER DOOMED ROMANCE.

I'VE LEARNED TO NEVER WORRY ABOUT LOSING  
THINGS.

A CAR, A PIN, A STAR, SOME GIN, A BET.

BUT THEN YOU SAID THAT WE WERE THROUGH

AND SUDDENLY I KNEW

THERE WAS ONE LOSS I'D REGRET.

I'VE LOST DIAMONDS AND PEARLS

LOVE LETTERS FROM EARLS

AND MORE SUITORS THAN GIRLS USUALLY DO  
 BUT FROM THIS GREAT LIST  
 I WILL HAVE TO INSIST  
 THAT THE ONLY THING MISSING IS YOU  
 I HAD BARBIES AND THEN  
 MY MOM CALLED AND MENTIONED  
 THEY'RE ALL AS THE FRENCH SAY PERDU  
 EVEN BARBIE HAD KEN  
 BUT I'M LEFT WITH RIEN  
 'CAUSE THE ONLY THING MISSING IS YOU.  
 AND SILLY AS IT SEEMS  
 I LOST ALL MY DREAMS  
 WHEN WE SAID ADIEU  
 AND I THINK YOU WILL FIND  
 THAT I LOSE MY MIND  
 WHEN I THINK OF YOU  
 AND NO ONE HAS SOLVED  
 THE CASE THAT INVOLVED THE REVOLVER  
 IN MY GAME OF CLUE  
 WELL I'VE STILL GOT THE KNIFE  
 BUT WHAT GOOD IS MY LIFE  
 THOUGH WITH ALL THAT I'VE LOST  
 NO I DON'T MIND THE COST  
 THINK WHAT MY NEPHEW CHRIS  
 JUST LOST AT HIS BRIS...  
 AND YOU'LL HAVE TO ADMIT THAT IT'S TRUE  
 THAT THE ONLY THING MISSING  
 DO YOU MISS THE KISSING?  
 THE ONLY THING MISSING IS YOU.

**COP.** We get a lot of DOAs. And sometimes they're badly decomposed. Sometimes they're partially mummified, if it's summer, with the heat. I don't know why this is, but a lot of times old women—and I'm not saying anything—but we'll find old women and they'll be naked! I don't know why this is. It's just, you know, it's summertime and it's warm. I mean, I do it and I'm sure you do too, you walk around with no clothes on. But that's, you know, that's not the way they want to be found.

*(NPR-style theme music. TERI and DOCTOR PALINURUS enter. This is a radio interview.)*

**TERI.** Welcome back. For those of you just joining us, we're talking to Dr. Alexander Palinurus, author of "Losers Weepers: A Cultural History of Nostalgia." Doctor, before the break, you mentioned Atlantis.

**PALINURUS.** That's right, Teri.

**TERI.** Which is, what, a continent?

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# **(I Am) NOBODY'S LUNCH**

***(A CABARET ABOUT HOW WE KNOW WHAT WE KNOW WHEN  
NOBODY KNOWS IF EVERYONE ELSE IS LYING AND WHEN  
SOMEONE OR SOMETHING WANTS TO HAVE YOU FOR LUNCH)***

**written by Steven Cosson**

**from interviews by the company\***

**music and lyrics by Michael Friedman**

*\*(I Am) Nobody's Lunch* was created with Andy Boroson, Daoud Heidami, Christina Kirk, Alix Lambert, Matt Maher, Caitlin Miller, & KJ Sanchez. Additional interviews contributed by Maria Dizzia, Jennifer Gillespie, Jen Taher, Amy Waschke and Chris Wells.

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## INTRODUCTION

(*I Am*) *Nobody's Lunch* came about as a response to a time in America when it seemed that the country had lost its mind. The years surrounding the invasion of Iraq felt like watching a slow train crash from somewhere inside the train, with the conductors calmly announcing that everything is ok (or occasionally screaming "The train is crashing!") It did not feel much like democracy. Feeling utterly powerless, we tried to at least follow the story. And the story went something like this: "We are not \_\_\_\_\_. Actually we are \_\_\_\_\_. We are \_\_\_\_\_ for your safety. What you thought was \_\_\_\_\_ has been redefined and now we are no longer \_\_\_\_\_ and it is unpatriotic to keep asking questions about \_\_\_\_\_."

In response to all this, the company wanted to do something more expressly political. Figuring out how to do so however posed some challenges. At such a time, the strongest impulse was to shout "That's a lie!" "Here's the truth!" But the problem wasn't really that the truth was censored. It was readily available. The problem was that the truth had lost its power to affect reality. Furthermore, shouting the truth violated one of our working principles. We had decided that any project had to be driven by an open-ended question, some sort of inquiry for which we couldn't presuppose a result. What's the point, in other words, of making a show about what we already know? After much deliberation, we came up with a question. Essentially, we wanted to know how everyone else was sorting out the mess. If a democracy depends in part on there being some common understanding of what is actually taking place in the world, then we wanted to know if in fact if such a consensus existed, and if not, then just how are people parsing reality?

As with *Gone Missing*, the company conducted wide-ranging interviews and Michael Friedman wrote songs at the same time. We found words of wisdom from all sorts of unlikely corners (like the Pleiades). And in the end I think we discovered some helpful thoughts for difficult times.

—*Steven Cosson*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*(I Am) Nobody's Lunch* received its U.S. Premiere by The Civilians at 59E59 Theaters, New York City, January 19, 2006. It was directed by Steven Cosson with the following cast:

Quincy Tyler Bernstine  
Matt Dellapina  
Brad Heberlee  
Daoud Heidami  
Caitlin Miller  
Jennifer R. Morris  
Andy Boroson

And the following production staff:

Piano..... Andy Boroson  
Choreographer..... Karinne Keithley  
Set Designer..... Andromache Chalfant  
Costume Designer..... Sarah Beers  
Lighting Designer..... Marcus Doshi  
Sound Designer..... Shane Rettig  
Stage Manager..... Catherine Bloch  
Dramaturg..... Jocelyn Clarke  
Dramaturg..... Jim Lewis  
Dramaturg..... Janice Paran  
Illustrator..... Josh Neufeld  
Associate Producer..... Kirsten Bowen

The play subsequently received its London Premiere by The Civilians at Soho Theatre, September 6, 2006. It was directed by Steven Cosson with the following cast:

Matt Dellapina  
Daoud Heidami  
Brandon Miller  
Caitlin Miller  
Lexy Fridell

And the following production staff:

Piano..... Andy Boroson  
Choreographer..... Karinne Keithley  
Set Designer..... Andromache Chalfant  
Costume Designer..... Sarah Beers  
Lighting Designer..... Marcus Doshi  
Sound Designer..... Shane Rettig

Stage Manager.....	Robert Signom III
Assistant Directors.....	Dyana Kimball, Donya Washington
Dramaturg.....	Jocelyn Clarke
Dramaturg.....	Jim Lewis
Dramaturg.....	Janice Paran
Illustrator.....	Josh Neufeld
Associate Producer.....	Kirsten Bowen

The initial development of the play was supported by a residency at The Public Theater (George C. Wolfe, Artistic Director). An earlier version of the play opened in September 2004 and was produced by The Civilians and presented by Performance Space 122. Development of this final version was provided with the assistance of the Sundance Institute (Philip Humberg, Artistic Director), and was premiered by The Civilians (Steve Cosson, Artistic Director; Kyle Gorden, Producing Director) in New York City, February, 2006.

# (I Am) NOBODY'S LUNCH

*A cast member enters and speaks to the audience. The stage is bare except for a small duffel bag.*

**PERFORMER.** Oh hi, gosh wow, hi everyone. So...before we start our show, *(I Am) Nobody's Lunch* (*A cabaret about how you know what you know when nobody knows if everyone else is lying and when someone or something wants to have you for lunch*), I just want... Look here's the thing. We did some focus groups and some of our previous audience members expressed a feeling that...that our show was well, confusing. So—that is NOT what we want to do to you, is that clear? So here's the basics. We interviewed people and asked them how they know what they know—today. How they know what's real, what's true and then we'll play the people we talked to... Yeah? And we started interviewing in what like 2003 and then we just keep going back for more.

Ok you get the idea? Great. That's great. So yeah remember 2003? “Weapons of Mass Destruction” “Shock and Awe” “Mission Accomplished” yeah that was 2003. “Mission Accomplished.” What else...2003. Uh...Tom Cruise was with Penelope Cruz. And uh Private Jessica Lynch— Do you know who she...? She's not the one with the leash and the *(Does thumbs up gesture like Lynndie England in the Abu Ghraib photos.)*. Jessica Lynch, US Army, captured by the Iraqis, then the BBC did an expose about the US rescue how it was sort of staged for the cameras. Like this. A stage. Oh right— Also! Last thing. This is a *cabaret*, ok? So there's no plot. No. Plot. As in story. I mean there are plots... there are plots against people aren't there? So, right.

*(ANOTHER PERFORMER peers out onto the stage, looking at the small duffel bag.)*

**ANOTHER PERFORMER.** Hey. What is—THAT?

**PERFORMER.** Huh. Excuse me is this somebody's bag? Did anyone leave this bag here?

*(She moves towards the bag.)*

**ANOTHER PERFORMER.** Chht.

**PERFORMER.** What? It's just a—right. You're right. *(To the audience:)* Hey this is no time to be leaving...bags...laying, lying, laying...about. *(Calling off-stage left:)* Is this someone's—

**ANOTHER PERFORMER.** *(Calling offstage right:)* Is this someone's bag? HEY!

*(The rest of the cast peers out and sees the bag.)*

**PERFORMER.** There is a bag on the stage.

*(Everyone looking like it's not their bag.)*

It's not...? No one...?

**THIRD PERFORMER.** (*Moving towards bag:*) Well why don't we just—  
 (*Everyone gathered round the bag.*)

**FOURTH PERFORMER.** Stand back!  
 (*Flinching.*)

**THIRD PERFORMER.** Jesus Christ.

**FOURTH PERFORMER.** I mean just stand back a little. You don't want your face so close when we open it.

**FIFTH PERFORMER.** I really don't think we should open it or move it or touch it.

**ANOTHER PERFORMER.** She's right.  
 (*Actors stuck.*)

**PERFORMER.** (*To audience:*) We are so sorry about this.

**THIRD PERFORMER.** Hold on. It's just a bag.  
 (*Picks up the bag.*)

**ANOTHER PERFORMER.** Go ahead...

**THIRD PERFORMER.** I'm just gonna...

**FIFTH PERFORMER.** Sure. Ok.

(*As THIRD PERFORMER exits there's a meow from inside the bag. THIRD PERFORMER pauses, then exits.*)

**PERFORMER.** So then. On with the show!

### THE TELEPHONE SONG

(*Text indicated with a "—" is spoken.*)

(*Ring.*)

—Why are you asking me this? Whatever, you have your reasons, right?

—You're not taping this are you? What was that sound? Is someone else on the phone?

(*Ring.*)

—I think the news is mostly just highlighting nonsense.

—I have friends who work for ABC, CBS news who say they've been given tapes by the government, pre-cut tapes and they're just running them without editing. I mean I don't want to buy into the (*Uses his hands to say "conspiracy theories."*)

—I mean I'm not sure just hearing about things is real. The radio sings about love, for instance, but love's something you have to experience for yourself to know it... That's true. Or at least I think that's true!

**SOLO.**

SINCE WE'VE BEEN GOING OUT I'M SEEING ONE  
 THING CLEARLY  
 YOU NEVER EVER SAY A WORD TO ME SINCERELY

WHEN WILL YOU COME INTO FOCUS  
AND SHOW ME THE WAY

**CHORUS.**

DON'T YOU WANT TO BE IN LOVE?  
DON'T YOU WANT A LOVE THAT'S TRUE  
DON'T YOU WANT TO FEEL IT'S TRUE IN YOUR HEART?

**SOLO.**

AND THOUGH I'M WAITING  
TO BE IN YOUR ARMS  
ENVELOPED,  
YOU'RE LIKE A PHOTOGRAPH  
THAT'S NEVER QUITE  
DEVELOPED  
WHY WON'T YOU COME INTO  
FOCUS  
AND SHOW ME THE WAY?

*(Ring.)*

—Why are you asking me this?

—I read the paper and I'm like—all of this is lies! I mean, I don't remember feeling this before—that it was all a lie.

*(Ring.)*

—What do I need a President who's going to entertain me? I don't need a whole... *(Gesture meaning "song and dance.")*

—We were lying in my bed and Kate's holding me and she said to me "I love you more than anyone does. More than your Mother loves you, more than your Father loves you, more than anyone." And then she broke up with me a week later.

**SOLO.**

HOW DO I KNOW WHAT I KNOW?  
HM...I GUESS I DON'T THINK I KNOW... WELL...I DON'T  
KNOW, WAIT...  
I KNOW A LOT ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS...WAIT...I  
KNOW...WAIT...  
I KNOW A LOT ABOUT A LOT ABOUT A LOT OF  
THINGS...

**SOLO.**

BUT I DON'T KNOW A LOT  
ABOUT ONE THING...  
NO, WAIT. I KNOW—  
NO. I DON'T KNOW A  
LOT ABOUT ONE THING,  
BUT I KNOW A LITTLE

**CHORUS.**

WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT  
TO BE YOUNG?  
WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT  
TO BELIEVE?  
WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT  
TO BELIEVE  
FROM THE START?

**CHORUS.**

WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT TO  
BE YOUNG?  
WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT  
TO BELIEVE?  
WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT  
TO BELIEVE

ABOUT A LOT OF THINGS. FROM THE START?  
PATHETIC. I'M PATHETIC.

**SOLO.**

WHAT ARE YOU SO AFRAID OF?  
WE'RE GONNA FIND AN ANSWER  
IT'S JUST AROUND THE CORNER AND I KNOW...  
WHAT ARE YOU SO AFRAID OF?  
WE'RE GONNA FIND AN ANSWER  
IT'S JUST AROUND THE CORNER AND I KNOW...

*(Ring.)*

—Why are you asking me this?

—I think there are two reasons why 911 happened

—Do you think Tom Cruise is gay?

—YES.

—Why do you ask that? Who cares?

—I've heard from a ton of different sources, different people. One of my friends her father is an agent and he's always telling us things about people.

—Doesn't he have a wife now and like four kids or something? ...He's a terrible actor.

—He's a very good actor! He is!! Top Gun!! I love his moves. He's a prick but I still love his movies.

—How do you know he's a prick?

—I don't know. I've read interviews with him. I've seen him on talk shows. He's just really arrogant.

—You know, why don't you just ask me the questions. She's my wife. I'm sure I'd know how she'd answer.

—That's why I always end up staying in bad relationships. I can't leave.

**CHORUS.**

DON'T YOU WANT TO BE IN  
LOVE?  
DON'T YOU WANT A LOVE  
THAT'S TRUE?  
DON'T YOU WANT TO FEEL  
IT'S TRUE IN YOUR HEART?

**SOLO.**

TOM CRUISE IS DEFINITELY  
GAY  
TOM CRUISE IS DEFINITELY  
GAY  
TOM CRUISE IS DEFINITELY  
GAY  
THAT'S WHAT MY HAIR  
DRESSER SAYS AND HE  
KNOWS

**CHORUS.** (*Simultaneously.*)

WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT TO BE YOUNG?  
 WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT TO BELIEVE?  
 WOULDN'T IT BE GREAT TO BELIEVE FROM THE  
 START?

**SOLO.** (*Simultaneously.*)

TOM CRUISE IS DEFINITELY GAY  
 TOM CRUISE IS DEFINITEY GAY  
 TOM CRUISE IS DEFINITEY GAY  
 THAT'S WHAT MY HAIRDRESSER SAYS AND HE KNOWS

**SOLO.** (*Simultaneously.*)

WHAT IS HAPPENING WITH THE BAG?  
 IS NOBODY CONCERNED ABOUT THE BAG?  
 WHAT ARE WE DOING WITH THE BAG?  
 DOES NOBODY ELSE CARE ABOUT THE BAG? OH, GOD!

**CHORUS.**

WHAT ARE YOU SO AFRAID OF?  
 WE'RE GONNA FIND AN ANSWER  
 IT'S JUST AROUND THE CORNER AND I KNOW...

WHAT ARE YOU SO AFRAID OF?  
 WE'RE GONNA FIND AN ANSWER  
 IT'S JUST AROUND THE CORNER AND I KNOW...

WHAT ARE YOU SO AFRAID OF?  
 WE'RE GONNA FIND AN ANSWER  
 IT'S JUST AROUND THE CORNER AND I KNOW...

(RING.)

**JESSICA LYNCH OPTOMETRIST.** Hello, yes this is Jessica Lynch. Yes, this is Oregon, Portland Oregon. Ok. I'm an optometrist. Ok. What I think happened to Jessica Lynch? Are you serious? Ok. Well I know, you know, what was on TV. Her convoy was on a mission...or something...and...she ...got stopped (*Implied male voice in background:*) What? Oh, ambushed. Yeah, that's the word ambushed (*To male:*) I know, I just said it. Ambushed, by the Iraqi army. And then they went in for her, you know with *night* goggles and the big rescue...God Yeah. You know, I hear that people think it was like, all for show that the rescue was like all for show but...not one of my friends, my family, not ONE person I know has ever mentioned anything of the sort. And now the media's saying too that there was, you know, no weapons of mass destruction and...no reason, and I...I...I don't believe that. But really, as far as this subject goes, I haven't given it that much thought, because I don't really...um...care...

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# **THE LADIES**

**A TEXT ABOUT GIRLS,  
AND THEIR FIERCE LITTLE FANTASIES**

**by Anne Washburn**

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## INTRODUCTION

Anne K became interested in the idea of developing a piece on dictators' wives in 2000 after directing *Mad Forest*, Caryl Churchill's play about the Romanian Revolution and working as assistant director on Jessica Hagedorn's *Dogeaters*—a play about the Philippines. The first Broadway show she ever saw was *Evita*...so she contemplated the connections, added Madame Mao, and approached me.

These were all women with a strong sense of the theatrical—all of them with the exception of Elena had a past, however checkered, in the performing arts, (and you could argue that Elena, who managed with a 4th grade education to pass herself off as an eminent scientist, was nicely in touch with her fantasy life). We were intrigued, inspired, and troubled by their confidence and their ferocity.

We checked out books from the library and settled into the research stage, that wonderful period during which—in contrast to the murky processes of writing and rehearsing—you feel competent and intellectual and cozy. We planned to read as much as possible and to meet periodically for discussions which would help to inform the writing of the play. It was important of course that we have good notes on these important conversations and I suggested that we record them. In the meantime I was beginning to write. Faced with a deadline for a residency, and not enough material, I suggested that we transcribe the tapes and see if there was anything particularly brilliant which could inspire me. It's a sobering exercise, seeing your own conversations laid out for you in black and white. We were fascinated by the clumsy humanness of the dialogues in the transcripts, and the alternate anti-grammars which lie at the heart of colloquial speech. Introducing ourselves as characters opened up the dramaturgy of the play.

We began a series of workshops with the actresses in which we gave them in no way enough time to look at very condensed (but still too long to absorb) write ups on the women's lives, and then gave them a very limited period of time to retell the information. The results were sprightly, and we used recordings of these sessions in the productions for exposition. The tone of these sessions also gave license to a certain strain of girlish hilarity which runs through the work.

—Anne Washburn

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*The Ladies* is played by 6 actresses in their 20s or 30s.

The actresses playing Anne and Anne are single cast, the other actresses each play the wife of a famous political leader, themselves, and assorted other roles.

ANNE WASHBURN, Playwright, also plays Jennie Dundas.

ANNE KAUFFMAN, Director, also plays Jennifer Morris.

JIANG QING, also plays Ladies, and Nina.

ELENA CEAUSESCU, also plays Ladies, Quincy, Wang Guangmei, Hung-Hsi, Pregnant Poor Person.

EVA PERON, also plays Ladies, Striar, Landlord Huang.

IMELDA MARCOS, also plays Ladies and Allison.

*Note:* Imelda does not speak, but only sings, until she does begin to speak.

Washburn's first name is pronounced 'Anne'; Kauffman's first name is pronounced 'Annie'.

**Voiceover Attributions:** In developing the script with the actresses they were given condensed histories of the first ladies, and an insufficient period of time to read them. They were then asked to tell what they remembered in an impossibly short period of time, and recordings of these sessions were used in the show. This exercise was repeated at various points in the process over a period of years, during which time several actresses had scheduling conflicts and had to leave the project.

Quincy Tyler Bernstein played Imelda in the first workshop; when she left her role was taken over by Allison Weller. Colleen Werthman played Anne Washburn until the Dixon Place/Cherry Lane production when the role was played by Jennie Dundas. Maria Dizzia played Elena Ceausescu until the Dixon Place production when her role was taken over by Quincy Tyler Bernstein.

So the transcripts of the impromptu histories have been condensed: Colleen Werthman's original comments are given to Jennie Dundas, who also has her own comments; Maria Dizzia's comments are given to Quincy Bernstein and some but not all of Quincy Bernstein's comments are farmed out to Allison Weller.

## NOTES

**The Script:** *The Ladies* combines original written material, transcribed material, and the actual words of the historic first ladies (indicated in the script with quotes).

UNINTELLIGIBLE indicates a word or phrase too garbled to be understood during the transcription process. Where it appears in the script it should be spoken as a word.

A slash mark ( / ) in a sentence indicates the point at which the next speaker begins her line.

**Staging:** Staging is as mobile and spare as possible, with minimal props.

Actresses read the Titles.

Staging should include a Spotlight, or Light of History which either illuminates or is illuminated when the actual words of the historical first ladies (indicated in the script with quotes) are said.

**Tone:** is variable throughout the piece. Much of it is high spirited, but dry, rather than wet. Camp and any kind of obvious satire are to be avoided.

Certain scenes should be played with seriousness of intent, and real emotional commitment:

- 1) The Model Opera at the beginning is performed with precise movements modeled from the actual model operas which may have paled artistically next to the traditional operas, but which had a great deal of skill, sincerity, and panache.
- 2) The Red Guard / Wang Guangmei segment is edited from an actual transcript. It should be handled respectfully: Wang Guangmei's plight is real; the Red Guard should not be played as a shrill one-note villain. The "Fish" segment between Anne and Anne, which is interspersed through the Red Guard segment, by contrast, should be played with total unconcern and carelessness.
- 3) Imelda's monologue should be as genuine as possible.
- 4) The songs. Have a giddy rampant quality but should have access to perfect seriousness as well. They should be ironic, beautiful, and stirring.

**Voiceovers:** The Voiceovers include expository material recorded in sessions with the actresses, who were given a very limited period of time to recall a limited amount of biographical material they hadn't been given enough time to read.

In these transcripts both Anne Kauffman, the director, and Jennifer Morris, the actress who plays Anne Kauffman, appear at the same time. Anne Kauffman's brief comments should be played by the actual director of the piece.\*

Some of these transcribed sessions should be pre-recorded, and some—the first time each lady is introduced—should be played live. In this case, Anne Kauffman should be played by a live or pre-recorded voice from offstage. Care should be taken that, while intelligible, these sessions have a degree of giddy urgency, as they were recorded under a time pressure.

The Recorded Conversation between Dovie Beams and Ferdinand Marcos: should be recorded with actors who are outside of the production, using a man to play Marcos.

\* Who should only be a woman, by the way, unless the piece is played by an all male cast.

**Nomenclature:** The actresses are referred to by their first names (Nina, Allison, Quincy), with the exception of Maria Striar, who is referred to as Striar, as a reflection of the time when Quincy's role was played by Maria Dizzia; and Jennie Dundas and Jennifer Morris who are both called by their last names for the obvious reasons.

The actresses sometimes play specific first ladies, sometimes play generalized first ladies, sometimes play actresses playing first ladies, sometimes play actresses and sometimes play something or someone falling somewhere in between.

All of the dialogue between Anne Kauffman and Anne Washburn is real, except where it is really really not.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*The Ladies* received its Premiere at Dixon Place, in association with Chashama and Cherry Lane Theatre in New York City in February, 2004. It was directed by Anne Kauffman with the following cast:

ANNE KAUFFMAN ..... Jennifer R. Morris  
ANNE WASHBURN ..... Jennifer Dundas  
JIANG QING (A.K.A. MADAME MAO),  
RADIO PLAYER, NINA ..... Nina Hellman  
ELENA CEAUÇESCU,  
WANG GUANGMEI, MODEL,  
OPERA ACTRESS, PREGNANT  
POOR PERSON, QUINCY ..... Quincy Tyler Bernstine  
EVA PERÓN, RED GUARD,  
TORVALD, MARIA ..... Maria Striar  
IMELDA MARCOS, RADIO PLAYER,  
RED GUARD, NORANNA, ALISON ..... Alison Weller  
Voice of Dovie Beams ..... Maria Dizzia  
Voice of Ferdinand Marcos ..... Damian Baldet

And the following production staff:

Sets ..... Alexander Dodge  
Costumes ..... Sarah Beers  
Lights ..... Gwen Grossman  
Sound ..... Mike Frank  
Visual Artist ..... Michelle Memran  
Choreographer ..... Karinne Keithley  
Musical Director ..... Kris Kukul  
Stage Manager ..... Rachel Fachner  
Lyrics and Tunes ..... Anne Washburn  
Musical Adaptation ..... Michael Friedman and Kris Kukul  
Music of *White Haired Girl* courtesy of Jamie H. J. Guan.

Developed with support from New York Theatre Workshop and the Public Theater through the New Work Now! Program.

Thanks to those who were part of *The Ladies* initial development: Colleen Werthmann, Aimee Guillot, Natalie Griffith and Maria Dizzia.

# THE LADIES

## ACT I

*There are voices in the darkness.*

**KAUFFMAN.** Uh, uh, okay, now that you've had 20 minutes to read the material what we want you to do is we want you to tell the life of each woman

**QUINCY.** Uh huh.

**KAUFFMAN.** in 30 seconds /

**MORRIS.** Oh No way!

*(General burst of consternation overtalking and shrieking.)*

**NINA.** What?

**QUINCY.** Oh my God. Annie Annie

*(Babble of spirited and giggling objection. Cuts out abruptly.)*

*(Lights up.)*

### TITLE: TESTING TESTING

**KAUFFMAN.** I didn't even know the Village People were gay. And, *(She holds the tape recorder up to speak into it directly.)* Anne Washburn didn't know that Boy George was gay.

**WASHBURN.** Did you know that Boy George was gay?

**KAUFFMAN.** Well, I don't think I knew what gay was.

**WASHBURN.** *(Into the recorder:)* I thought he was imaginative. *(Holds it at a distance.)* Is it working?

**KAUFFMAN.** Yeah. Look at all the cool red lights.

**WASHBURN.** But shouldn't they be moving?

**KAUFFMAN.** It's not a stereo system.

**WASHBURN.** Oh okay. Okay.

**KAUFFMAN.** Okay so we're

**WASHBURN.** We're talking about

**KAUFFMAN.** We're talking about Madame Mao

**WASHBURN.** We're—how do you say her name again? How do you pronounce her name?

**KAUFFMAN.** Zhung Ching

**WASHBURN.** Jung Ching

*(JIANG CHING enters the space, on her way elsewhere.)*

**KAUFFMAN.** There you go.

**WASHBURN.** UNINTELLIGIBLE the Ju? Say 'Zh'

**KAUFFMAN.** Yeah, and then the Q is a—is a CH

**WASHBURN.** Zung Ching. Zung Ching.

**KAUFFMAN.** Zhung Ching.

*(JIANG QING pauses briefly, listens, shakes her head, and walks off.)*

**WASHBURN.** Zhung—you're not totally sure are you.

**KAUFFMAN.** No, I'm—I'm not totally sure but I'm—I'm—it's what did I just say? Zhung Ching.

**WASHBURN.** Zhung...zhung...

*(EVA PERON marches through the space briskly, on her way to elsewhere.)*

**KAUFFMAN.** Zhung Zhung Ching.

*(KAUFFMAN hails EVA PERON.)*

Can I get another gin and tonic please.

*(She turns to WASHBURN.)*

Do you want something?

*(EVA PERON, meanwhile, who has only barely registered the request, continues on her way.)*

**WASHBURN.** Oh, no. Well, what time is it?

**KAUFFMAN.** 9:20. What time do you have to be out of here?

**WASHBURN.** Soon.

**KAUFFMAN.** Okay.

**WASHBURN.** I have to be on the lower east side in

**KAUFFMAN.** In 20 minutes or something?

**WASHBURN.** Yeah.

**KAUFFMAN.** You know what can I make, I'm gonna make a quick phone call to Rob to tell him to meet me so he can get his ass on the train before... goddammit. So you were talking about...

**WASHBURN.** Oh, about this performing arts background thing, about the thing where all the Ladies had this performing arts background and—

**KAUFFMAN.** Hey Rob? It's Anne how are ya? Good, what's up? Sure. Yeah, I'm I'm it's 9:20 I'm gonna be done in about 20 minutes. And, I'm at I'm at uh I'm near uh the Flea Theater. But I can meet probably you in like, do you wanna meet me in the East Village or something? Because I figure by the time you get

*(WASHBURN waves at an oblivious IMELDA MARCOS who is just wandering through.)*

**WASHBURN.** Can we get the check?

**KAUFFMAN.** It's gonna be so crowded though, don't you think? I know, well let's just I guess let's just meet there. Does that sound good? Excellent. I'll see you there. Bye. (*Wry:*) I hope we got all that on tape.

**VOICEOVER.** This session is live.

**KAUFFMAN.** Madame Mao, thirty seconds...go.

**QUINCY.** She was born in 1914, 'Pure and Simple'

**STRIAR.** Pure and / Simple

**MORRIS.** Pure and Simple. Her mother was a concubine of a hard-drinking man named something / like

**STRIAR.** Tiger Wolf (*Giggles.*)

**MORRIS.** Tiger Wolf.

**STRIAR.** Who beat / them both.

**DUNDAS.** Maybe was a prostitute also.

**MORRIS.** Yes.

**STRIAR.** Beat 'em both.

**ALLISON.** She ran away.

**DUNDAS.** And then her name was Jung He.

**NINA.** Bound feet, bound feet.

**QUINCY.** She was poor

**STRIAR.** Didn't like those bound feet.

**MORRIS.** She ripped those bound feet off and they called her Renov / ated Feet.

**QUINCY.** Renovated Feet.

**DUNDAS.** They used to beat her up. And then she / ran away.

**MORRIS.** And then she had to walk for the rest of her life like a / , like, a Quasimodo Walk.

**DUNDAS.** Funny walk.

**STRIAR.** She got another name Jung He, or something / right?

**QUINCY.** Yeah. Which means something about a crane.

**KAUFFMAN.** 10 seconds.

**MORRIS.** Her dad flew into a rage, beat the mother.

**NINA.** She met Mao and 1960 got to be the head of the Cultural Army.

**STRIAR.** She went to art school with a big headdress.

**NINA.** Head of the cultural army. She wore khakis.

**KAUFFMAN.** You guys have 5 seconds.

*(JIANG QING and WANG GUANGMEI at tea. It should seem like an improvisation. The other actresses watch closely.)*

**JIANG QING.** So I was talking about...

**WANG GUANGMEI.** You were talking about your past.

**JIANG QING.** Right. My past Well, Wang Guangmei. What can I tell you about my past (*Stalling:*) There are so many interesting interesting stories...

**WANG GUANGMEI.** One story that I think is interesting is you could start by talking about how you got your current name: Zhung...

*(Little pause.)*

**JIANG QING.** Ching?

*(A bit of a pause. They look at each other.)*

**WANG GUANGMEI.** Yes. (*Mini beat.*) Let's say 'yes.'

**KAUFFMAN.** But okay so wait a minute now you're saying you think Jiang Qing was this great actress?

**WASHBURN.** Everyone says Jiang Qing was great.

**KAUFFMAN.** Not everyone says that at all.

**WASHBURN.** Who said that and also

**KAUFFMAN.** I heard her Dolls House wasn't so great.

**WASHBURN.** Who did you hear that from. Where did you hear that. Who told you that?

**KAUFFMAN.** Who told you that.

**WASHBURN.** She got good criticism and and that was like that was like New York now like you couldn't Shanghai then was like New York now like what the bitch goddess city or something.

**KAUFFMAN.** Oh

**WASHBURN.** Bitch

**KAUFFMAN.** Right

**WASHBURN.** Goddess city. Just like New York now let's say. And you couldn't

**KAUFFMAN.** Well like New York maybe in the seventies

**WASHBURN.** Yeah like New York in the seventies

**KAUFFMAN and WASHBURN.** Not now.

**TITLE: IF WE'RE TALKING ABOUT WOMEN IN POWER  
AND WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT ALL WOMEN IN POWER  
WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT HILARY CLINTON IS  
NOT THE SAME THING.**

**LADY (NINA).** Here. We have these biscuits.

**LADY (STRIAR).** I like what you've done with your infrastructure.

**LADY (NINA).** Thank you. Would you like to try on my lipstick? I think the shade would be more flattering on you than it is on me. If it looks better on you then you can keep it.

**LADY (STRIAR).** Thank you. I like these biscuits.

**LADY (NINA).** Thank you. They are made from the people. (*Mini beat.*)  
Did I say that correctly?

(*IMELDA sings from offstage.*)

**IMELDA.**

I DID WHAT I DID WHAT I DID I DID FOR LOVE  
FOR THAT CREAMY DREAMY FEELING WE ALL DIE OF

**WANG GUANGMEI.** You know I'd love to hear all about your childhood.

**JIANG QING.** Well, it was very rural. And I was very poor. And my mother may have been a prostitute. And I saw—and it was the end of an era, a time of transition—anyway I saw heads, decapitated heads on the walls of the city, that had been mounted there on spikes. Yes that's right, I remember that.

**WANG GUANGMEI.** That must have been formative.

**JIANG QING.** Possibly. And my father—what was my father's name? Tiger...

**WANG GUANGMEI.** Tiger...

**JIANG QING.** Not Tiger Woods.

**WANG GUANGMEI.** No.

**JIANG QING.** Tiger Wolf!

**WANG GUANGMEI.** Yes!

**JIANG QING.** Yes. A hard drinking, cantankerous man. I remember.

**WANG GUANGMEI.** That must have been difficult.

**JIANG QING.** I don't think I like sympathy. About my past. I'm sure I don't like to be, um, *pitied*. I bet I hate pity.

**WANG GUANGMEI.** But even about, I thought you were a hypochondriac. I thought hypochondriacs—

(*The actress is transforming into* JIANG QING.)

**JIANG QING.** Hypochondriac? What does that mean. Exactly. Wang Guangmei.

**WANG GUANGMEI.** It means—

**JIANG QING.** Let me put it this way: I know what it means. What are you saying?

**WANG GUANGMEI.** Um

**JIANG QING.** You're not saying that I'm that my symptoms that my uh extreme sensitivity to light, and...noise. And (*To audience:*) insomnia?

**WANG GUANGMEI.** I'm sure.

**JIANG QING.** Insomnia.

What were we talking about? Hypochondria...

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT  
FROM THIS SCENE.  
THE PLAY CONTINUES ON  
THE NEXT PAGE.**

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# **PARIS COMMUNE**

**by Steven Cosson  
and Michael Friedman**

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## INTRODUCTION

On a rainy day in 2001, I found myself leafing through books that I'd been assigned in college but had never read. One of these tomes contained an essay by Kristin Ross, a professor at NYU, about the culture of the Paris Commune of 1871. Ross described how near the end of the seventy-day revolt, the people who had driven the government out of the city threw an enormous concert in the Tuileries Palace, the former seat of Empire. At this concert, the great singer La Bordas sang her signature tune, *La Canaille*, the chorus of which goes "C'est La Canaille, et bien j'en suis," or "They are the lowest scum, and so am I." A few days later, the army from Versailles retook the city, and over the course of the infamous "Bloody Week" killed tens of thousands of people.

The image of this concert seemed like a show waiting to happen, though a crazy one, and the only person crazy enough to think it was a good idea, and, in the end, to push the project into fruition, was Steve Cosson. Steve and I began researching the Commune, and the more we read, an overabundance of material emerged. Two of the members of the Commune's government were songwriters—one of them, Jean-Baptiste Clément, wrote the Commune's anthem, *The Cherries of Spring*, as well as a series of astonishing songs chronicling the violence of the Commune's fall; the other, Eugène Pottier, wrote the words to *The Internationale*, a song that would have a healthy future in the twentieth century, during the Commune. We gained a couple heroines, the Anarchist virgin Louise Michel and the glamorous Communist Elisabeth Dmitrieff, a villain, Adolphe Thiers, and laughed at the underground rantings of Père Duchêne.

The piece has been through more revisions than I think we ever expected when we started working in 2002, and we have been lucky that so many institutions have given us their generous support along the way.

In the end, what has drawn us to this material is the way in which the Commune is a moment in which all sorts of forces—culture, class, politics, performance, violence, economics, journalism—meet in a single moment and are clarified. The opportunity to bring to life the forgotten people who tried to give themselves, as one puts it, the power to control their own lives, has been unforgettable. At the end, as the actors Can-Can into the future, the fragments of the history of revolution and labor go on and on. And the question—how much are people willing to take before they can't take it anymore—still lingers in our post-revolutionary society.

—Michael Friedman

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### *Men*

MAN 1. Throughout: Baker and Actor/Baker. Also: Medical Student, Citizen 5.

MAN 2. Throughout: Père Duchêne and Actor/Père Duchêne. Also: Guardsman, Rossel, Worker Poster, Citizen 2, Dead Man 1.

MAN 3. Throughout: Thiers, Actor/Thiers, and Rigault. Also: French Soldier, Parisian Citizen 1, Minister, Club Leader, Courbet, Councilman 3, Citizen 1, Captain.

### THE PIANIST

### *Women*

WOMAN 1. Throughout: Seamstress and Actress/Seamstress. Also: Bertholde.

WOMAN 2. Throughout: Louise Michel and Actress/Louise Michel. Also: Parisian Citizen 2, Councilman 2, Citizen 3, Voice, Dead Woman 2.

WOMAN 3. Throughout: Elisabeth Dmitrieff and Actress/Elisabeth. Also: Parisian Citizen 3, General, Citizen 4, Councilman 4, Woman 1.

WOMAN 4. Throughout: La Bordas and The Dressmaker. Also: Councilman 1, Woman 3.

### THE SOPRANO

## SONGS

All songs translated and adapted by Michael Friedman.

*Le Temps des Cerises (The Cherries of Spring)*: music and lyrics by Jean-Baptiste Clément

*La Canaille*: lyrics by Alexis Bouvier, music by Joseph Darcier

*The Armistice*: author unknown

*Ab, Comme J'aime Les Militaires! (Oh, I Love Men in Uniform)*: lyrics by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, music by Jacques Offenbach

*Chanson de Mai (Song of May)*: music and lyrics by Jules Jouy

*Les Canards Tyroliens (The Yodeling Ducks)*: lyrics by Cognard Frères, music by Thérèse

*Leur Bon Dieu (God of the Bigots)*: lyrics by Eugène Pottier, music by Emile Bouillon

*Galop Infernal*: music by Jacques Offenbach

*L'Internationale*: lyrics by Eugène Pottier, music by Pierre Degeyter

*Ab! Je Veux Vivre*: lyrics by J. Barbier and M. Carré, music by Charles Gounod

*Mon Homme (My Man)*: music and lyrics by Jean-Baptiste Clément

*Le Capitain (The Captain)*: music and lyrics by Jean-Baptiste Clément

*Tarantelle*: music by Georges Bizet

*La Semaine Sanglante (The Bloody Week)*: music and lyrics by Jean-Baptiste Clément

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work-in-progress version of *Paris Commune* was presented as a workshop production as part of The Public Lab Series, The Public Theater, New York City, opening April 4, 2008. It was directed by Steven Cosson with the following cast:

LA BORDAS,  
DRESSMAKER, and others..... Kate Buddeke  
SEAMSTRESS, and others ..... Ayşan Çelik  
ELISABETH DMITRIEFF, and others ..... Nina Hellman  
THE SOPRANO .....IVA  
LOUISE MICHEL, and others .....Jeanine Serralles  
FRENCH ARMY SOLDIER,  
ADOLPHE THIERS,  
RAOUL RIGAULT, and others .....Brian Sgambati  
BAKER, and others.....Jeremy Shamos  
LE PÈRE DUCHÊNE,  
PARIS GUARDSMAN,  
GENERAL ROSSEL, and others .....Sam Breslin Wright

And the following production staff:

Choreography .....Tracy Bersley  
Scenic Design..... Alexander Dodge  
Costume Design .....Sarah Beers  
Lighting Design ..... Thomas Dunn  
Sound Design.....Ken Travis  
Musical Director / Pianist .....Dan Lipton  
Assistant Director ..... Jessica Chayes  
Dramaturgs.....Jocelyn Clarke,  
Abigail Katz  
Production Stage Manager..... Emily Park Smith

*Paris Commune* was developed by The Civilians, (Steven Cosson, Artistic Director); a Page to Stage workshop production at La Jolla Playhouse, (Des MacAnuff, Artistic Director; Terence Dwyer, Managing Director); and a Public Lab workshop production at The Public Theater, (Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director; Mara Manus, Managing Director); and by residencies at the MacDowell Colony and New York Theatre Workshop.

# PARIS COMMUNE

## Scene One

*An empty stage. We see musicians, they're playing "The Cherries of Spring."  
Two performers enter.*

**ACTOR who plays BAKER.** Imagine. In this space. Right here. (*A gesture.*)  
A stage.

**ACTRESS who plays SEAMSTRESS.** A really BIG stage.

**ACTOR/BAKER.** Right. Palatial.

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** Meaning that it is actually a palace. Imagine  
here we are on stage inside a palace. (*They both gesture.*) It's the Tuileries Palace  
in Paris in the center of Paris connected to, actually, part of the Louvre.

**ACTOR/BAKER.** And it's 1871. Because now, as in today—if you were to  
go to Paris today—this space, this Tuileries Palace we're imagining, is gone.  
Today it's just an empty space between the two sides of the Louvre. Gone.

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** But in 1871 it's here.

**ACTOR/BAKER.** It's here. It's night. It's springtime.

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** It's a concert.

**ACTOR/BAKER.** A very *unusual* concert.

*(Actress playing LA BORDAS evokes a little bit of the image of La Bordas  
singing at the Tuileries Palace.)*

### LA BORDAS.

WHEN WE SING AGAIN  
OF CHERRIES IN SPRING  
THE GAY NIGHTINGALE  
THE BLACKBIRD'S LONE CALL  
ALL ECHOING SWEET AND CLEAR  
THE PRETTY YOUNG GIRLS WITH MADNESS OF SPRING-  
TIME  
AND LOVERS WHO FEEL THE WARMTH OF ONE NEAR  
WHEN WE SING AGAIN  
OF CHERRIES IN SPRING  
THE BLACKBIRD'S LONE CALL  
IS ALL THAT WE'LL HEAR

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** That might have been sung at the concert by  
Rosalie Bordas or "La Bordas" as she was known. Now, this singer would  
not otherwise be allowed inside the Palace, but she sang at the concert in the  
Tuileries Palace on this night—

**ACTOR/BAKER.** In springtime.

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** And this song, “The Cherries of Spring.”

**ACTOR/BAKER.** Or in French, “Le Temps des Cerises.”

**BOTH.** “Le Temps des Cerises”

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** This song from this moment forward would always mean “The Paris Commune.”

**ACTOR/BAKER.** “The Commune.” A time—a brief time—when the poor rose up and took Paris as their own.

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** They took Paris and for a time, they imagined...well, simply...but, quite radically, they imagined that they controlled their own lives. And for this idea, let’s call it *liberation* this idea demanded a new...city. A new world. I mean...BIG.

**ACTOR/BAKER.** BIG like this palace.

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** Yes. And like this palace, now as in “today,” The Paris Commune is gone.

**ACTRESS/ELISABETH.** But more. More than “gone.” Erased. I would say, it was “erased.”

**ACTOR/BAKER.** Ok. But the song, “Le Temps des Cerises,” it survives. It was written by Jean Baptiste Clément who was, obviously, a songwriter but also—also he was a political player in the story of the Paris Commune and his song survives. In fact all the songs, here, in our show, by Clément and others, all of them have survived from 1871 until now. And as we have these songs, the Paris Commune survives.

*(We see a bit more of LA BORDAS’ performance.)*

**LA BORDAS.**

BUT THEIR TIME IS SHORT  
 THE CHERRIES OF SPRING  
 WHEN WE WALK IN PAIRS  
 TO GATHER AND DREAM OF TOKENS FROM LOVERS  
 THESE CHERRIES OF LOVE  
 EACH DRESSED LIKE THE OTHERS  
 FALL DOWN FROM THE TREE LIKE BLOOD IN A  
 STREAM

**ACTOR/BAKER.** And words. Words too survive. And so we can imagine the audience for the concert in the Palace because some of the audience, they wrote about it:

**AUDIENCE MEMBER (played by ACTOR/THIERS).** “I joined myself to a river of people from every rank of life. There were shopkeepers and their wives, workingmen, even washerwomen... Every class of Parisian was represented in the throng that swayed and hustled through the rooms.” Of course, when one saw some of the poorest among them looking over the

balconies of the Tuileries Palace one was inclined to ask, “Where do such creatures come from?”

**ACTOR/BAKER.** Yes, the common, working people of Paris were *inside* the Palace.

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** La Canaille.

**ACTOR/BAKER.** “La Canaille.” Would you say that translates better as “rabble,” or as “scum”?

**ACTRESS/ELISABETH.** Scum? I mean, who says ‘rabble’ anymore?

**ACTOR/BAKER.** Fine then, scum. La Canaille, inside the Palace. We know, someone wrote about this, we know that “the vast staircase” some staircase in the Palace “. . . is littered with bedding. Shirts and stockings hang over the gilded railings. Names are scrawled on the walls in pencil and in ink and by the scratchings of a knife. . .” Right, because some of the Commundard “scum” have been living here in the Palace. Washing out their socks, loading their guns. . . in the Palace!

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** Right, loading their guns inside the Palace because. . .

**ACTOR/BAKER.** It’s a revolution.

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** See, it’s a concert. In springtime. During a revolution.

**ACTOR/BAKER.** Listen:

**AUDIENCE MEMBER (played by ACTOR/THIERS).** The Palace is now completely full, and still another 2,000 people stand in a long line in the garden outside. In course of time the whole garden is full of people who look up at the lights streaming from the windows and sit about on chairs quietly smoking cigars and enjoying the lovely evening, listening to the occasional boom of a shell out beyond the gates of Paris.

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** Right. Outside the gates of Paris, the opposing army—which is really the French Army that would very much like to take Paris back—they’re skirmishing against the Commune’s soldiers and they’re firing shells that sometimes hit near the walls of Paris.

**ACTOR/BAKER.** While within the gates of Paris—the people gather for this concert inside the Palace, yes! Imagine! Thousands of people and an orchestra. . . actors reciting. . . political leaders and uh. . . there was something about an amateur violinist, yodeling ducks and some guy who made “ob-scene barnyard noises,” I mean who knows? And then this song!

**ACTRESS/SEAMSTRESS.** This song thrown down like a gauntlet against the army outside.

**ACTOR/BAKER.** Someone there, someone wrote this down:

**ANOTHER AUDIENCE MEMBER (played by ACTOR/PÈRE DUCHÊNE).** La Canaille! They throw that name at us as the ultimate in-

sult. Fine then, that name will be our weapon. And La Bordas she's our warrior. She is a goddess of Liberty born from the slums of Paris. Let her sing. Let her sing the song that has made her famous. La Canaille!

*(Full fledged LA BORDAS at the concert.)*

## **LA BORDAS.**

### **LA CANAILLE**

IN THE HEART OF PARIS' MIRE  
THERE LIVES A RACE OF IRON BORN.  
DEEP IN ITS SOUL A RAGING FIRE  
THAT BURNS THE FLESH FROM BODY TORN.  
ALL OF ITS CHILDREN BORN IN SLUMS

AND IF YOU SEE THEM I THINK YOU'LL KNOW WHY:  
THEY ARE THE LOWEST SCUM!  
BUT SO AM I!

NOT THE CRIMINALS FROM PRISON  
THESE ARE THE HONEST WORKING MEN  
WHO EVERY MORNING HAVE ARISEN  
TO WORK WITH HAMMER OR WITH PEN.  
THEY ARE THE FATHERS EARNING CRUMBS  
SLAVING AWAY TIL THE DAY THAT THEY DIE.  
THEY ARE THE LOWEST SCUM!  
BUT SO AM I!

IT'S THE MAN WHOSE BODY IS THIN  
WITH SUNKEN EYES AND DIRTY FACE,  
WHOSE SHAKY HANDS AND HARDENED SKIN  
COME FROM SOME DARK UNHEARD OF PLACE.  
AND AS HE PASSES YOU HE HUMS  
MOCKING YOUR SCORN WITH A LAUGH AND A SIGH:  
HE IS THE LOWEST SCUM!  
BUT SO AM I!

AND BY NOW THEIR ARMY IS COMING,  
DRESSED ALL IN RAGS AND WOODEN SHOES.  
THEIR MOTHER FRANCE CAN HEAR THEM DRUMMING  
DRAPED IN HER FLAG TO WIN OR LOSE.  
SOON YOU WILL SEE THEM WITH THEIR GUNS  
AS TO THE ENEMY THEY CRY:  
HERE ARE THE LOWEST SCUM!  
AND HERE AM I!

**PAGES HAVE BEEN CUT  
FROM THIS SCENE.  
THE PLAY CONTINUES ON  
THE NEXT PAGE.**

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# **SHADOW OF HIMSELF**

**by Neal Bell**

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## INTRODUCTION

In working as a guest writer with The Civilians, I had to overcome one big stumbling block: how fascinating I found the raw, unmediated interview material The Civilians actors gathered, during the summer we collaborated together. Steve Cosson had asked me, as an experiment, to come up with a way of turning this particular group of interviews—about ‘protectors, defenders and masculinity’—into some kind of a “fiction.” And when I heard the actors presenting their interview material to the group—speaking without notes, in the voices of the people they’d talked to—I was mesmerized: both by the astounding way in which The Civilians actors seemed to BECOME the people they’d interviewed, as they presented to the company...and by the powerful reality of the words these real-life characters were speaking. Steve did his own version of cutting-and-pasting these interviews together, for a public presentation of the raw material—and my challenge was to do...something *else*. But what that ‘something else’ might be wasn’t clear at all—until I happened to think about the legend of Gilgamesh...and realized that ‘Gilgamesh’ wasn’t just a random “where did THAT come from?” thought. That epic—which has haunted me for decades—addresses a number of the issues and concerns that the “masculinity project” had brought up—and I thought it might work, as a meditation on the interview material, if I retold the tale of Gilgamesh, moving backwards and forwards in time, reframing the words of the men and women who’d spoken so eloquently in The Civilians interviews. I’ve always been a lover of story—and *Gilgamesh* gave me a solid structure to work with and depart from. I’ve been fortunate to have several opportunities to develop and refine the script—beginning with The Civilians themselves, when they were guest artists of the Orchard Project. I’d also like to thank the New York State Arts Council, for the grant that made it possible for me to do this work with the Civilians. Long ago I’d done a version of collaborative documentary theatre—for a project about the Chicago Conspiracy Trial. I’ve wanted a shot at that group experience ever since—and *Shadow of Himself* was, for me, a great opportunity—decades later—to try that kind of experiment again.

—Neal Bell

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

GIL, a king

NK, an opponent, then a friend

GIL'S MOTHER / A YOUNG WIFE / A TEMPLE WHORE / A BODY  
/ HUMBABA / FARAWAY, an immortal

YOUNG MAN 1 / SOLDIER 1 / HUMBABA / SCORPION 1

YOUNG MAN 2 / SOLDIER 2 / HUMBABA / SCORPION 2

The play is written to be performed by four men and one woman—any doubling possible.

3 actors play the monster Humbaba.

Any combination of actors plays the Chorus.

## SETTING

The very distant past, and the present.

Near the Euphrates River.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Shadow of Himself* was commissioned and developed by The Civilians. The play takes inspiration from a workshop that involved the following participants:

Actors ..... Emily Ackerman,  
Maria Dizzia, Michael Esper,  
Matt Maher, Brian Sgambati  
Director..... Steven Cosson  
Assistant Director ..... Jordan Young  
Research Coordinator..... Bixby Eliot  
Research Assistants ..... Sarah Bishop-Stone, Adam Bradley,  
Katie Honaker, Sarah Marcus  
Acting Apprentices ..... Soneela Nankani, Eric Piatkowski,  
Nate Wheeler, Samantha Sklaar

Developed with the support of The Public Theater and The Orchard Project.

# SHADOW OF HIMSELF

(1)

*In a palace, long ago.*

GIL, *the King, arm-wrestles a SOLDIER.*

*The CHORUS watches him.*

**CHORUS.** Look at these towering walls—he made them.  
Climb to the top and see how broad—  
walk along them, looking down at the city he built,  
in his image:  
bright sheen of his muscles: floating oil on water, on fire—  
the movement of his thought, like a blade—  
the beauty of his fury in battle,  
brave to the point of stupidity—  
these made him a god—

*(GIL pins the SOLDIER's arm, with a thud.)*

—in his own eyes.

*(The SOLDIER slouches away.)*

**GIL.** Another!

Bring me an *equal!*

*(SOLDIER 2 approaches—GIL launches into pinning him.)*

**CHORUS.** As a god, he demanded tribute:  
their daughters and their wives,  
virgins, whores, mothers and children—  
ones who were tight, in their youth,  
ones who were looser, in their age—  
he was a stake at the bottom of the gaping pit  
into which they fell—  
those who weeded the crops,  
baked the bread, or wrote romance novels,  
tended to the loom, or the Pilates class,  
or the orgies—  
they fell into his maw, and when he was sated—  
he spat them out.

He took their men to war

and did not return them.

No deposit.

*(GIL pins the SECOND SOLDIER's arm, looks around for other challenges.)*

**GIL.** A *worthy* opponent, I said! An equal!  
Who is left? *(Pause.) No one?*

*(Pause.)*

I am the strongest man alive—  
the bravest, and the most beautiful.  
Only Death could defeat me—and even He  
would tremble before me, drizzle of shit  
running down his bony legs, before I was undone.

*(Pause.)*

Now bring me women!

*(A WOMAN approaches.)*

**CHORUS.** One future he will never see:

**GIL.** *(To a WOMAN in a singles bar:)* Did it hurt?

**WOMAN.** What?

**GIL.** When you fell from the sky.

*(She looks at him, uncomprehending. He has to explain:)*

Because—you know—...

**WOMAN.** I didn't fall from the sky.

**GIL.** No, I know—but—...

I mean, like—if you were an angel...

**WOMAN.** But I'm not.

**GIL.** But if you were.

*(Pause.)*

**WOMAN.** Does this ever work?

**GIL.** *(Shaking his head:)* Do you want to fuck?

**WOMAN.** Fuck yourself, you're closer.

*(She moves away.)*

**CHORUS 1.** One future disappearing...

**CHORUS 2.** Why will he never see it?

**CHORUS 1.** Because—when he believed that he was a god—  
he was mistaken.

*(Pause.)*

He won't see enough of Forever to participate in Speed Dating.

**CHORUS.** Then how will he learn humility?

**GIL.** Bring me women! *Now!*

*(Another WOMAN approaches.)*

Lie down.

**WOMAN.** My man would kill you.

**GIL.** Then where is he?

*(She doesn't answer.)*

Lie down on your back. Spread your legs.

**WOMAN.** You saw him die.

**GIL.** When?

**WOMAN.** In the night—in the valley—when the enemy fell upon you.

**GIL.** Was it my brave lieutenant with the spear jammed into the socket of his eye? Or ripping away his jaw—  
*that* brave lieutenant?

*(Pause.)*

Men die in battle so that you can live.

**WOMAN.** —to be raped by you.

**GIL.** Should we stop fighting?

Lose what we had paid with our blood to win?

*(Quoting Dubya:)*

“Best to honor the sacrifice of our fallen troops—”

**WOMAN.** —to be raped by you.

*(Pause.)*

**GIL.** Lie down on your back. Spread your legs.

Open yourself with your fingers.

I can reach inside of you, where you bleed—

**WOMAN.** *(Countering:)* Manhole—you have a hole in *you*.

Where the spear can shove its way up and through  
the meat of your body, out your mouth.

A brighter, bloody tongue flickering, catching the light.

*(Pause.)*

**GIL.** Bring me *another* woman!

*(Pause.)*

**WOMAN.** I *am* telling the truth.

You were never a god. Only part of you.

On your mother's side.

**GIL.** And a muzzle!

*(Pause.)*

**WOMAN.** Do you stand at a window at night, looking out—  
and wonder what that sound could be—

like an endless break of waves on a beach?

Gnashing teeth of the men whose lovers you take—

the weeping of mothers—

their beautiful sons come back to them only in dreams,

in a haze of vultures...

*(Pause.)*

*(Challenged, GIL stares at himself in a mirror.)*

**GIL.** Look at my reflection:

I am the strongest man, the bravest—

**WOMAN.** And your people want you to choke on a piece of gristle.

*(Pause.)*

**CHORUS.** Let him choke on a piece of gristle.

Let his blow-dryer fall in his bath,

let him wake in the night with a pain in his chest,

and dial 911, and hear the blatt of a busy signal—

let his brakes fail, let him live too long,

let him find a suspicious mole,

let him have children.

*(Pause.)*

No—

*(A more terrible thought occurring.)*

Let him see himself.

Let him open his eyes.

*(Pause.)*

**GIL.** *(Looking into the mirror.)* No man is my equal.

*(He reaches out, to touch his reflection in the mirror. It dawns on him:)*

I am completely alone.

*(To the WOMAN:)*

Get out of here. *Go!*

*(The WOMAN moves off. GIL shouts.)*

Do I have one waiting who's deaf and *dumb*? Bring her!

*(Far off, the roar of a terrible beast. GIL, out of habit it, ignores it—but finally looks out the window, wondering how distant is the danger.)*

## (2)

*Two Young Men wander cautiously up a mountainside.*

**YOUNG MAN 1.** My father would fucking kill me.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** So don't fuckin' tell him. Genius.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** *(Looking back from where they came:)* If the flock wanders off—

**YOUNG MAN 2.** “We were chasing away a lion—”

*(YOUNG MAN 1 whirls around.)*

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Where??

*(YOUNG MAN 2 gives him a look.)*

Oh: a “lion.”

But you did see—something horrible?

(YOUNG MAN 2 *nods.*)

Were you afraid? Because I’m shitless.

(*Pause.*)

**YOUNG MAN 2.** See—don’t tell me that. I kinda hate you, when you tell me that.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** It walked like a man—but it wasn’t a man?

**YOUNG MAN 2.** It was eating grass, by the waterhole—you know, chomp a mouthful, stuff its face...

Then it looked around, and it saw me—  
and it stood up—*on its hind legs...*

**YOUNG MAN 1.** I would’ve pissed myself.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** I did.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** But you said you weren’t—[afraid]

**YOUNG MAN 2.** I was lying!

(*Pause.*)

It was trapped, so it started to charge me—

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Damn!

**YOUNG MAN 2.** —and then, right before it slammed into me, it bounced—

**YOUNG MAN 1.** It bounced?

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Like a friggin’ gazelle. Up that cliffside. And out of here.

(*Pause.*)

**YOUNG MAN 1.** (*Trying to get it straight.*) You pissed yourself—

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Shut up.

**YOUNG MAN 1.** (*Then why...?*) But you came back.

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Because—I dunno...  
this dream I useta have, about flying—  
that’s how it ran, up the hillside...

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Do you think it’ll come again?

**YOUNG MAN 2.** If you shut up. If that would be possible.

(*For a moment they wait in silence, nervously looking in all directions.*)

(*Then YOUNG MAN 1 falls into a game they play, speaking softly.*)

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Keanu!

**YOUNG MAN 2.** Button it!

**YOUNG MAN 1.** Play!

(*Pause.*)

**YOUNG MAN 1.** *Keanu.*

**THIS PLAY IS  
NOT OVER!**

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