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A Few of My Favorite Scenes

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A FEW OF MY FAVORITE SCENES

by

Nancee Farrer

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DEPARTMENT HONORS

in

Theatre

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, UT

Spring 2006

DRUNKEN BEAR PRODUCTIONS

**PRESENTS
A SENIOR RECITAL
STARRING . . .**

**NANCEE
FARRER**



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 22

5:00 PM & 7:30 PM

STUDIO THEATRE

DRUNKEN BEAR PRODUCTIONS



PRESENTS

A SENIOR RECITAL

STARRING...

NANCY FARRER

My Thanks

So many people have helped me with this project. Without their help, this recital would never have been.

First, I'd like to thank all those who, when I asked them at the last minute, were able to take time from their already busy schedules and devote it to my show. Thanks also goes to my awesome actors who so often showed up to my rehearsals dead tired from a previous rehearsal with somebody else or from a full day of work, and yet they still put all their effort into my rehearsals. Thank you. And thanks for bouying me up when I needed it.

A huge thanks goes to my professors - Adrienne, Artemis, Lynda and Kevin. It's amazing how much I have learned in my incredibly short time here. Becuase of the challenges you set for the students and your diligence as educators, I am literally a totally different person now than I was coming into this program. Thank you.

Finally, I thank everybody who has come to support me tonight. It's good to have you here. Whether performer or tech support, audience member or critic, my biggest hope is that we all enjoy the show.

Nancee

A Midsummer Night's Dream

William Shakespeare

Helena
Demetrius
Lysander
Hermia

Amber Rolfe
Tyson Smith
Jared Rounds
Nancee Farrer

The Bald Soprano

Eugene Ionesco

Mrs. Martin
Mr. Martin
Waitress

Nancee Farrer
Tyson Smith
Amber Rolfe

The Beauty Queen of Leenane

Martin McDonagh

Maureen
Mag (mother)

Nancee Farrer
Amber Rolfe

Marvin's Room

Scott McPherson

Lee
Hank
Dr. Charlotte

Nancee Farrer
Tyson Smith
Amber Rolfe

The Man I Love (A Dance)

Nancee Farrer, Tyson Smith, Jared Rounds, Autumn Sargent, Amber Rolfe

The Lonely Way

Arthur Schnitzler

Johanna
Sala

Nancee Farrer
Tyson Smith

INTRODUCTION

I presented my senior project on Wednesday, February 22, 2006, at 5:00p.m. and again at 7:30p.m. It was the final product of several months of research followed by several weeks of rehearsals.

This project was designed, directed, and produced by myself. I chose all of the scenes, managed all of the rehearsals, chose the actors, designed the sets and gathered any technical support that I needed for the run of the recital.

My original task with this portion of the research began as an analytical paper on the background of each of the scenes that I performed for my senior project. However, I soon discovered that a strictly analytical paper would digress too far from my original work on the project. That is because some of the artistic choices that I had made had nothing to do with the original staging of the plays or their historical backgrounds. Those sorts of creative decisions call for justification. Therefore, along with the analysis of the plays themselves, there will be descriptions of my own personal choices with each scene.

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM (A Fight)

By all structural appearances, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is not really a play. It has no real climax, as the conflicts are all resolved by magic. There is no real protagonist, because there are three separate stories occurring at once, with each of the three groups of characters having own goals. Many people tend to view Puck as the most important character in the play, and therefore the main protagonist, as this character is the one who actively initiates the deeds which change the course of the play. Since tensions are caused by circumstances and mishaps, there is no true antagonist, either. However, since Puck is the one who makes all of the mistakes that affect everybody else negatively, he can be seen as an antagonist. However, this creates something of a paradox. Which is he, protagonist or antagonist? Can he be both?

This Shakespearian comedy is traditionally set in a forest, and that is exactly what I did. For a selection from Act III scene ii, in which Demetrius and Lysander are both in love (due to a love potion) with Helena and repulsed by Hermia, I had the action take place in a clearing of the forest where there were big rocks on which to climb. Staging was one of the tougher challenges with this scene, as it was to be a combat scene. There was some unarmed combat, but the majority of the fighting was with rapiers and daggers. I choreographed the fight to occur on different levels of the set. As we climbed, we were to sword fight simultaneously. We also had to ensure the safety of the audience as we wielded the long swords. The stage was not large and the audience was close around it, and therefore, we had to make sure that we were

positioned far enough away from the audience so that we did not hit anybody. At the same time, we also had to make sure that we were far enough away from the set pieces to ensure that we would not hit any of them either.

What added to the challenge was the fact that we had to fight while delivering our lines. The tricky part was to make sure that the audience could understand the words around all the clanking of swords and the big arm movements as we swung the swords. It may seem like an odd occurrence, but big stage movements can sometimes muddle the meaning of the words, even when the words are loud and clear.

Conversely, too little movement can also muddle meaning, even though the actor speaks his lines clearly. The audience either cannot understand what they hear because of the movement—as in the first case; or they cannot understand the dialogue very well without movement to emphasize its meaning—as in the second case. For this reason, I had to take care to choreograph all sword movement so that it fell in between the dialogue.

I took a more contemporary route with this scene. Although the rapier and dagger are fitting for the time period, our physical postures and gestures were not. The play is set in a make believe world of Ancient Greece combined with Renaissance England. People in sixteenth century England were physically rigid—especially people of the court. Women wore stays, or corsets, that were incredibly stiff. They also wore stiff ruffs around their necks, which made any sort of head movement difficult. Women would not have been able to bend over to pick up a sword, let alone catch their breath while fighting. I had the actors in my scene running all over the stage, wrestling, climbing up and down platforms, and even diving off of the highest

platform. I and another actress did the greater part of the fighting. Therefore, in order for this scene to transpire the way I had envisioned it the movement would have to be more in the style of the present day.

255 *Lysander.* If thou say so, withdraw and prove it too.

Demetrius. Quick, come!

Hermia. Lysander, whereto tends all this?

Lysander. Away, you Ethiopel!

Demetrius. No, no; he'll
Seem to break loose; take on as^o you would follow,
But yet come not: you are a tame man, go!

260 *Lysander.* Hang off, thou cat, thou burr! Vile thing,
let loose,

Or I will shake thee from me like a serpent!

Hermia. Why are you grown so rude! What change is
this,
Sweet love?

Lysander. Thy love! Out, tawny Tartar, out!
Out, loathed med'cine! O hated potion, hence!

Hermia. Do you not jest?

265 *Helena.* Yes, sooth;^o and so do you.

Lysander. ~~Demetrius, I will keep my word^o with thee.~~

Demetrius. I would I had your bond, for I perceive
~~A weak bond holds you: I'll not trust your word.~~

Lysander. What, should I hurt her, strike her, kill
her dead?

270 Although I hate her, I'll not harm her so.

Hermia. What, can you do me greater harm than
hate?

Hate me! Wherefore? O me! What news, my love!
Am not I Hermia? Are not you Lysander?
I am as fair now as I was erewhile.^o

257 *Ethiope* blackamoor (brunette) 258 *take on as* make a fuss
as if 265 *sooth* truly 266 *my word* my promise to fight with you
274 *erewhile* a little while ago

Since night^o you loved me; yet since night you left
me.

Why, then you left me—O, the gods forbid!—
In earnest, shall I say?

Lysander. Ay, by my life!
And never did desire to see thee more.
Therefore be out of hope, of question, of doubt;
Be certain, nothing truer. 'Tis no jest
That I do hate thee, and love *Helena*.

Hermia. O me! You juggler! You canker blossom!
You thief of love! What, have you come by night
And stol'n my love's heart from him?

Helena. Fine, i' faith!
Have you no modesty, no maiden shame,
No touch of bashfulness? What, will you tear
Impatient answers from my gentle tongue?
Fie, fie! You counterfeit, you puppet, you!

Hermia. Puppet? Why so? Ay, that way goes the
game.

Now I perceive that she hath made compare^o
Between our statures; she hath urged her height,
And with her personage, her tall personage,
Her height, forsooth, she hath prevailed with him.
And are you grown so high in his esteem,
Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak!
How low am I? I am not yet so low
But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.

Helena. I pray you, though you mock me, gentlemen,
Let her not hurt me: I was never curst;^o
I have no gift at all in shrewishness;
I am a right maid^o for my cowardice.
Let her not strike me. You perhaps may think,

275 *Since night* since the beginning of this night 282 *canker blossom* dog rose (or possibly worm that cankers the blossom)
290 *compare* comparison 300 *curst* quarrelsome 302 *right maid*
true young woman

Because she is something lower than myself,
That I can match her.

305 *Hermia.* Lower! Hark, again!

Helena. Good *Hermia*, do not be so bitter with me.
I evermore did love you, *Hermia*,
Did ever keep your counsels, never wronged you;
Save that, in love unto *Demetrius*,

310 I told him of your stealth unto this wood.

He followed you; for love I followed him.
But he hath chid me hence, and threatened me
To strike me, spurn me, nay, to kill me too.

315 And now, so you will let me quiet go,
To Athens will I bear my folly back,
And follow you no further. Let me go.
You see how simple and how fond^o I am.

Hermia. Why, get you gone. Who is't that hinders you?

Helena. A foolish heart, that I leave here behind.

Hermia. What, with *Lysander*?

320 *Helena.* With *Demetrius*.

Lysander. Be not afraid. She shall not harm thee,
Helena.

Demetrius. No, sir, she shall not, though you take her
part.

Helena. O, when she's angry, she is keen and shrewd!^o
She was a vixen when she went to school;
325 And though she be but little, she is fierce.

Hermia. "Little" again! Nothing but "low" and "little"!
Why will you suffer her to flout me thus?
• Let me come to her.

Lysander. Get you gone, you dwarf;
You minimus,^o of hindring knotgrass^o made,
You bead, you acorn!

317 fond foolish 323 keen and shrewd sharp-tongued and shrewish
329 minimus smallest thing 329 knotgrass (a weed that allegedly
stunted one's growth)

Demetrius. You are too officious 330

In her behalf that scorns your services.
Let her alone. Speak not of *Helena*;
Take not her part; for, if thou dost intend^o
Never so little show of love to her,
Thou shalt aby^s it.

Lysander. Now she holds me not. 335

Now follow, if thou dar'st, to try whose right,
Of thine or mine, is most in *Helena*.

Demetrius. Follow! Nay, I'll go with thee, check by
jowl. *[Exeunt Lysander and Demetrius.]*

Hermia. You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you:^o
Nay, go not back.

Helena. I will not trust you, I, 340
Nor longer stay in your curst company.
Your hands than mine are quicker for a fray,
My legs are longer though, to run away.

Hermia. I am amazed,^o and know not what to say.
[Exeunt [Helena and Hermia].]

Oberon. This is thy negligence. Still thou mistak'st,
Or else committ'st thy knaveries willfully. 345

Puck. Believe me, king of shadows, I mistook.
Did not you tell me I should know the man
By the Athenian garments he had on?
And so far blanceless proves my enterprise, 350
That I have 'noited an Athenian's eyes;
And so far am I glad it so did sort,^o
As this their jangling I esteem a sport.

Oberon. Thou see'st these lovers seek a place to fight.
Hie therefore, Robin, overcast the night. 355
The starry welkin^o cover thou anon

333 intend give sign, direct (or possibly "pretend") 335 aby pay
for 339 all this coil is 'long of you all this turmoil is brought about
by you 344 amazed in confusion 352 sort turn out 356 welkin
sky

THE BALD SOPRANO

The Bald Soprano is considered the one of the first anti-plays, “which characteristically combine a dream or nightmare atmosphere with grotesque, bizarre, and whimsical humor.”¹ Originally written in French, its author, Eugene Ionesco, had meant the play to parody what he saw in life—to “show how human discourse had devolved into a collection of empty platitudes and self evident truisms.”² He used repetitive phrasing throughout the play in mockery of the repetitive phrases he kept coming across in the English books when he was first learning the language. Upon seeing his offbeat play, his friends loved it and found it quite comical, and urged him to get it produced. Thus began Eugene Ionesco’s career as a playwright. *The Bald Soprano* debuted in Paris on May 11, 1950, under the French title *La Cantatrice Chauve*.

The Bald Soprano is set in England, the setting is an average middle class home, and the characters seem typically average. The characters talk as if what they say makes complete sense, yet the topics about which they speak are nonsensical. For example, in the scene that I selected for my senior project, Mr. and Mrs. Martin arrive for dinner at the Smith residence. They enter the house together and sit down together, and then proceed to have a conversation about how familiar they both seem to each other. Upon comparing their personal lives, they discover striking similarities, such as the fact that they both took the same train to get to the Smith’s home—in fact, they both rode the same train car—in fact, they sat in seats directly across from one another. Yet they cannot really recall it clearly. They can only recall the

¹ www.levity.com/corduroy/ionesco.htm

² www.enotes.com/bald-soprano/print

circumstances and not each other. They soon discover that they live in the same house and sleep in the same bedroom, in the same bed with the green eiderdown; and that they both have a daughter who is two years old, very pretty, with one white eye and one red eye. After these discoveries, they conclude that they must be husband and wife. They do not recall one another, but since their circumstances bind them together, they accept that they are married. Their *logical* conclusion is then negated when the maid enters and announces to the audience that Mr. and Mrs. Martin are not really married, due to the fact that Mr. Martin's daughter has a white right eye and a red left eye, while Mrs. Martin's daughter has a red right eye and a white left eye.

Just as the scene with Mr. and Mrs. Martin begins with logical progress on an illogical topic, and ends with nothing having been accomplished or really even said, the play itself starts out calm and ordered and slowly descends into chaos. Conversation disintegrates into nonsensical lines overlapping more nonsensical lines until one cannot discern anything that is said. And then: BLACKOUT. Ionesco had originally written the play to simply start over again after the blackout and repeat itself. It was not until after its one hundredth performance that he rewrote the end to begin with Mr. and Mrs. Martin at the top of the play saying Mr. and Mrs. Smith's lines, with Mr. and Mrs. Smith taking Mr. and Mrs. Martin's places.

Ionesco set the play in the early 1900s. People dressed more formally back then. Many wore corsets, which gave them an upright posture. I chose to have a more contemporary feel to it by dressing in neutral black clothes, yet still maintaining the stiff posture and movements of British people of the 1900s. As previously mentioned, the home was an average middle class English home with an average middle class

English family. I opted not to have a living room setting. In fact, the set was as absurd as the dialogue is. Consisting of a round table and two chairs and center stage (to represent a café diner), with a set of stairs upstage right and another set of stairs downstage left, my scene partner and I, as Mr. and Mrs. Martin, were to move up and down the stairs, one step at a time, with each discovery or doubt that we had. Each discovery would take us up a step, while each doubt took us down. On each step we were to perform a daily activity, such as eating breakfast, shaving or putting on makeup, reading, doing a leisure activity, getting into a robe, etc. With each progression up the steps, we would cease the activity on the previous step and take up the new one on our new step. Regression down the steps worked the same way.

To aid my scene partner and myself in smoothly transitioning from one activity to the next as we moved up and down the steps, I enlisted two people to handle the various props involved in each activity. They were to simply transfer the props from our hands to a props table and vice versa.

To my surprise and horror, one of the notes that one of my professors gave me during a preview performance regarded a racist undertone that I had unknowingly created in this scene. Absurdist pieces are very stylized. Each action and placement or usage of a prop tends to hold meaning. Therefore, the actors must take particular care in how they move, where they look, and even how they say certain lines. One of the people whom I had enlisted to handle the props is black. Since this play is set in the early 1900s, due to the way in which I had staged it, she appeared to be in the role of a servant—or slave. Even though the other “servant” was a white male, it still appeared racially offensive. In another play, this racist theme may not have surfaced,

but since it was such a stylized piece, the presence of a black person would tend to hold some symbolism, no matter what role she was in.

The solution was to make my two stagehands appear as stagehands rather than servants. I accomplished this by having them enter the scene as stagehands, with their individual identical boxes of props for the scene. In full view of the audience, they were to set up the props on identical tables situated in identical positions in relation to either set of stairs, and then they were to hand the props to us in an identical fashion. Not only did this revision neutralize the race issue, but it also pulled more focus onto me and my scene partner by taking focus away from the two helpers. The audience knew that they were not necessarily part of the scene and therefore, did not watch them for any reaction to what we were doing.

After my scene partner and I had reached the top of our individual sets of stairs, having discovered that we must be married, we froze while the character MARY entered and explained to the audience that we were actually mistaken in concluding that they were married. At this point, we repeated, in reverse, the order of the steps that we had taken, until we finally ended up back in our seats at the top of the scene.

This was the scene into which I put the most effort. The repetitive nature of the lines and the stylized movement demanded it. It was the first scene that I had selected for my senior project and the first one that I had started working. Yet it was the last one that I had ready to go. Ironically, the scene that gave me the most challenge was the one that the audience loved best. Such payoff made the scene worth the effort. Would I attempt something like that again? Don't ask.

cigarette in your mouth, or you powder your nose and rouge your lips, fifty times a day, or else you drink like a fish.

MR. SMITH: But what would you say if you saw men acting like women do, smoking all day long, powdering, rouging their lips, drinking whisky?

MRS. SMITH: It's nothing to me! But if you're only saying that to annoy me . . . I don't care for that kind of joking, you know that very well!

[She hurls the socks across the stage and shows her teeth. She gets up.*]

MR. SMITH [also getting up and going towards his wife, tenderly]: Oh, my little ducky daddles, what a little spitfire you are! You know that I only said it as a joke! [He takes her by the waist and kisses her.] What a ridiculous pair of old lovers we are! Come, let's put out the lights and go bye-byes.

MARY [entering]: I'm the maid. I have spent a very pleasant afternoon. I've been to the cinema with a man and I've seen a film with some women. After the cinema, we went to drink some brandy and milk and then read the newspaper.

MRS. SMITH: I hope that you've spent a pleasant afternoon, that you went to the cinema with a man and that you drank some brandy and milk.

MR. SMITH: And the newspaper.

MARY: Mr. and Mrs. Martin, your guests, are at the door. They were waiting for me. They didn't dare come in by themselves. They were supposed to have dinner with you this evening.

MRS. SMITH: Oh, yes. We were expecting them. And we were hungry. Since they didn't put in an appearance, we were going to start dinner without them. We've had nothing to eat all day. You should not have gone out!

MARY: But it was you who gave me permission.

MR. SMITH: We didn't do it on purpose.

* In Nicolas Bataille's production, Mrs. Smith did not show her teeth, nor did she throw the socks very far.

MARY [bursts into laughter, then she bursts into tears. Then she smiles]: I bought me a chamber pot.

MRS. SMITH: My dear Mary, please open the door and ask Mr. and Mrs. Martin to step in. We will change quickly. [Mr. and Mrs. Smith exit right. [Mary opens the door at the left by which Mr. and Mrs. Martin enter.]

MARY: Why have you come so late! You are not very polite. People should be punctual. Do you understand? But sit down there, anyway, and wait now that you're here.

[She exits. Mr. and Mrs. Martin sit facing each other, without speaking. They smile timidly at each other. The dialogue which follows must be spoken in voices that are drawling, monotonous, a little singsong, without nuances.*]

MR. MARTIN: Excuse me, madam, but it seems to me, unless I'm mistaken, that I've met you somewhere before.

MRS. MARTIN: I, too, sir. It seems to me that I've met you somewhere before.

MR. MARTIN: Was it, by any chance, at Manchester that I caught a glimpse of you, madam?

MRS. MARTIN: That is very possible. I am originally from the city of Manchester. But I do not have a good memory, sir. I cannot say whether it was there that I caught a glimpse of you or not!

MR. MARTIN: Good God, that's curious! I, too, am originally from the city of Manchester, madam!

MRS. MARTIN: That is curious!

MR. MARTIN: Isn't that curious! Only, I, madam, I left the city of Manchester about five weeks ago.

MRS. MARTIN: That is curious! What a bizarre coincidence! I, too, sir, I left the city of Manchester about five weeks ago.

MR. MARTIN: Madam, I took the 8:30 morning train which arrives in London at 4:45.

MRS. MARTIN: That is curious! How very bizarre! And what a coincidence! I took the same train, sir, I too.

MR. MARTIN: Good Lord, how curious! Perhaps then, madam,

* In Nicolas Bataille's production, this dialogue was spoken in a tone and played in a style sincerely tragic.

it was on the train that I saw you?

MRS. MARTIN: It is indeed possible; that is, not unlikely. It is plausible and, after all, why not!—But I don't recall it, sir!

MR. MARTIN: I traveled second class, madam. There is no second class in England, but I always travel second class.

MRS. MARTIN: That is curious! How very bizarre! And what a coincidence! I, too, sir, I traveled second class.

MR. MARTIN: How curious that is! Perhaps we did meet in second class, my dear lady!

MRS. MARTIN: That is certainly possible, and it is not at all unlikely. But I do not remember very well, my dear sir!

MR. MARTIN: My seat was in coach No. 8, compartment 6, my dear lady.

MRS. MARTIN: How curious that is! My seat was also in coach No. 8, compartment 6, my dear sir!

MR. MARTIN: How curious that is and what a bizarre coincidence! Perhaps we met in compartment 6, my dear lady?

MRS. MARTIN: It is indeed possible, after all! But I do not recall it, my dear sir!

MR. MARTIN: To tell the truth, my dear lady, I do not remember it either, but it is possible that we caught a glimpse of each other there, and as I think of it, it seems to me even very likely.

MRS. MARTIN: Oh! truly, of course, truly, sir!

MR. MARTIN: How curious it is! I had seat No. 3, next to the window, my dear lady.

MRS. MARTIN: Oh, good Lord, how curious and bizarre! I had seat No. 6, next to the window, across from you, my dear sir.

MR. MARTIN: Good God, how curious that is and what a coincidence! We were then seated facing each other, my dear lady! It is there that we must have seen each other!

MRS. MARTIN: How curious it is! It is possible, but I do not recall it, sir!

MR. MARTIN: To tell the truth, my dear lady, I do not remember it either. However, it is very possible that we saw

each other on that occasion.

MRS. MARTIN: It is true, but I am not at all sure of it, sir. *Seat + room*

MR. MARTIN: ~~Dear madam, were you not the lady who asked me to place her suitcase in the luggage rack and who thanked me and gave me permission to smoke?~~

MRS. MARTIN: But of course, that must have been I, sir. How curious it is, how curious it is, and what a coincidence!

MR. MARTIN: How curious it is, how bizarre, what a coincidence! And well, well, it was perhaps at that moment that we came to know each other, madam?

MRS. MARTIN: How curious it is and what a coincidence! It is indeed possible, my dear sir! However, I do not believe that I recall it. *Seat*

MR. MARTIN: Nor do I, madam. [*A moment of silence. The clock strikes twice, then once.*] Since coming to London, I have resided in Bromfield Street, my dear lady.

MRS. MARTIN: How curious that is, how bizarre! I, too, since coming to London, I have resided in Bromfield Street, my dear sir.

MR. MARTIN: How curious that is, well then, well then, perhaps we have seen each other in Bromfield Street, my dear lady.

MRS. MARTIN: How curious that is, how bizarre! It is indeed possible, after all! But I do not recall it, my dear sir. *Seat*

MR. MARTIN: I reside at No. 19, my dear lady.

MRS. MARTIN: How curious that is. I also reside at No. 19, my dear sir. *1*

MR. MARTIN: Well then, well then, well then, well then, perhaps we have seen each other in that house, dear lady?

MRS. MARTIN: It is indeed possible but I do not recall it, dear sir. *Seat*

MR. MARTIN: My flat is on the fifth floor, No. 8, my dear lady.

MRS. MARTIN: How curious it is, good Lord, how bizarre! And what a coincidence! I too reside on the fifth floor, in flat No. 8, dear sir!

MR. MARTIN [*musings*]: How curious it is, how curious it is, how curious it is, and what a coincidence! You know, in my bedroom there is a bed, and it is covered with a green eiderdown. This room, with the bed and the green eiderdown, is at the end of the corridor between the w.c. and the bookcase, dear lady!

MRS. MARTIN: What a coincidence, good Lord, what a coincidence! My bedroom, too, has a bed with a green eiderdown and is at the end of the corridor, between the w.c., dear sir, and the bookcase! 2

MR. MARTIN: How bizarre, curious, strange! Then, madam, we live in the same room and we sleep in the same bed, dear lady. It is perhaps there that we have met!

MRS. MARTIN: How curious it is and what a coincidence! It is indeed possible that we have met there, and perhaps even last night. But I do not recall it, dear sir! 2

MR. MARTIN: I have a little girl, my little daughter, she lives with me, dear lady. She is two years old, she's blonde, she has a white eye and a red eye, she is very pretty, her name is Alice, dear lady.

MRS. MARTIN: What a bizarre coincidence! I, too, have a little girl. She is two years old, has a white eye and a red eye, she is very pretty, and her name is Alice, too, dear sir! 3

MR. MARTIN [*in the same drawling monotonous voice*]: How curious it is and what a coincidence! And bizarre! Perhaps they are the same, dear lady!

MRS. MARTIN: How curious it is! It is indeed possible, dear sir. [*A rather long moment of silence. The clock strikes 29 times.*] 4

MR. MARTIN [*after having reflected at length, gets up slowly and, unhurriedly, moves toward Mrs. Martin, who, surprised by his solemn air, has also gotten up very quietly. Mr. Martin, in the same flat, monotonous voice, slightly singsong*]: Then, dear lady, I believe that there can be no doubt about it, we have seen each other before and you are my own wife . . . Elizabeth, I have found you again!

[*Mrs. Martin approaches Mr. Martin without haste. They embrace without expression. The clock strikes once, very loud. This striking of the clock must be so loud that it makes the audience jump. The Martins do not hear it.*]

MRS. MARTIN: Donald, it's you, darling! 5
[*They sit together in the same armchair, their arms around each other, and fall asleep. The clock strikes several more times. Mary, on tiptoe, a finger to her lips, enters quietly and addresses the audience.*]

MARY: Elizabeth and Donald are now too happy to be able to hear me. I can therefore let you in on a secret. Elizabeth is not Elizabeth, Donald is not Donald. And here is the proof: the child that Donald spoke of is not Elizabeth's daughter, they are not the same person. Donald's daughter has one white eye and one red eye like Elizabeth's daughter. Whereas Donald's child has a white right eye and a red left eye, Elizabeth's child has a red right eye and a white left eye! Thus all of Donald's system of deduction collapses when it comes up against this last obstacle which destroys his whole theory. In spite of the extraordinary coincidences which seem to be definitive proofs, Donald and Elizabeth, not being the parents of the same child, are not Donald and Elizabeth. It is in vain that he thinks he is Donald, it is in vain that she thinks she is Elizabeth. He believes in vain that she is Elizabeth. She believes in vain that he is Donald—they are sadly deceived. But who is the true Donald? Who is the true Elizabeth? Who has any interest in prolonging this confusion? I don't know. Let's not try to know. Let's leave things as they are. [*She takes several steps toward the door, then returns and says to the audience:*] My real name is Sherlock Holmes. [*She exits.*]

[*The clock strikes as much as it likes. After several seconds, Mr. and Mrs. Martin separate and take the chairs they had at the beginning.*]

MR. MARTIN: Darling, let's forget all that has not passed between us, and, now that we have found each other again,

let's try not to lose each other any more, and live as before.

MRS. MARTIN: Yes, darling.

[Mr. and Mrs. Smith enter from the right, wearing the same clothes.]

MRS. SMITH: Good evening, dear friends! Please forgive us for having made you wait so long. We thought that we should extend you the courtesy to which you are entitled and as soon as we learned that you had been kind enough to give us the pleasure of coming to see us without prior notice we hurried to dress for the occasion.

MR. SMITH *[furious]*: We've had nothing to eat all day. And we've been waiting four whole hours for you. Why have you come so late?

[Mr. and Mrs. Smith sit facing their guests. The striking of the clock underlines the speeches, more or less strongly, according to the case. The Martins, particularly Mrs. Martin, seem embarrassed and timid. For this reason the conversation begins with difficulty and the words are uttered, at the beginning, awkwardly. A long embarrassed silence at first, then other silences and hesitations follow.]

MR. SMITH: Hm. *[Silence.]*

MRS. SMITH: Hm, hm. *[Silence.]*

MRS. MARTIN: Hm, hm, hm. *[Silence.]*

MR. MARTIN: Hm, hm, hm, hm. *[Silence.]*

MRS. MARTIN: Oh, but definitely. *[Silence.]*

MR. MARTIN: We all have colds. *[Silence.]*

MR. SMITH: Nevertheless, it's not chilly. *[Silence.]*

MRS. SMITH: There's no draft. *[Silence.]*

MR. MARTIN: Oh no, fortunately. *[Silence.]*

MR. SMITH: Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. *[Silence.]*

MR. MARTIN: Don't you feel well? *[Silence.]*

MRS. SMITH: No, he's wet his pants. *[Silence.]*

MRS. MARTIN: Oh, sir, at your age, you shouldn't. *[Silence.]*

MR. SMITH: The heart is ageless. *[Silence.]*

MR. MARTIN: That's true. *[Silence.]*

MRS. SMITH: So they say. *[Silence.]*

MRS. MARTIN: They also say the opposite. *[Silence.]*

MR. SMITH: The truth lies somewhere between the two. *[Silence.]*

MR. MARTIN: That's true. *[Silence.]*

MRS. SMITH *[to the Martins]*: Since you travel so much, you must have many interesting things to tell us.

MR. MARTIN *[to his wife]*: My dear, tell us what you've seen today.

MRS. MARTIN: It's scarcely worth the trouble, for no one would believe me.

MR. SMITH: We're not going to question your sincerity!

MRS. SMITH: You will offend us if you think that.

MR. MARTIN *[to his wife]*: You will offend them, my dear, if you think that . . .

MRS. MARTIN *[graciously]*: Oh well, today I witnessed something extraordinary. Something really incredible.

MR. MARTIN: Tell us quickly, my dear.

MR. SMITH: Oh, this is going to be amusing.

MRS. SMITH: At last.

MRS. MARTIN: Well, today, when I went shopping to buy some vegetables, which are getting to be dearer and dearer . . .

MRS. SMITH: Where is it all going to end!

MR. SMITH: You shouldn't interrupt, my dear, it's very rude.

MRS. MARTIN: In the street, near a café, I saw a man, properly dressed, about fifty years old, or not even that, who . . .

MR. SMITH: Who, what?

MRS. SMITH: Who, what?

MR. SMITH *[to his wife]*: Don't interrupt, my dear, you're disgusting.

MRS. SMITH: My dear, it is you who interrupted first, you boor.

MR. SMITH *[to his wife]*: Hush. *[To Mrs. Martin:]* What was this man doing?

MRS. MARTIN: Well, I'm sure you'll say that I'm making it up—he was down on one knee and he was bent over.

MR. MARTIN, MR. SMITH, MRS. SMITH: Oh!

MRS. MARTIN: Yes, bent over.

THE BEAUTY QUEEN OF LEENANE

Playwright Martin McDonagh wrote *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* in eight days. The play premiered in Dublin, Ireland in 1996. He was just twenty six years old. By the time it opened in London the following year, he had three other plays showing in London simultaneously. Three years later, the play went on to win four Tony awards on Broadway.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane is the first in a trilogy of plays set in western Ireland. The two other plays in the trilogy include *A Skull in Connemara* and *The Lonesome West*. While the characters do not carry over from one play to the next, the three plays are all set in the same small town of Leenane in Connemara, County Galway; and all three plays deal with similar themes. McDonagh tends to write plays that deal with the dark subject matter of death and violence. What would one expect from a writer whose idols are David Mamet, Martin Scorsese, David Lynch, and Quentin Tarentino? Like his mentors, McDonagh has made an art out of violence.

The Beauty Queen of Leenane portrays an intensely dysfunctional mother-daughter relationship. Mag constantly plays mind games with her spinster daughter Maureen, quietly calling into question Maureen's ability to live a socially acceptable life. She likes to make Maureen feel as if she could never make it in the world, never get a decent man to marry her, and never make something of herself. It is no wonder that Maureen dreams of getting away from her mother. She tried it once by moving England, but the British treated the Irish with so much contempt that she could not handle their taunting and name calling. She had a nervous breakdown and became so psychologically unsound that she had to check into an insane asylum. Now back in

Ireland, her mother tries to fuel her feelings of incompetence in the world, in order to keep her home to take care of her. Mag is simply afraid of being alone. However, Maureen is more desperate than ever to escape.

Hope for Maureen comes in the form of Pato. Pato is a decent, honest man, with a good job in construction, and he truly cares for Maureen. The only hitch in the relationship is that he is set to move to America, and they have only just met. It is too early for them to be thinking of marriage, but Maureen knows that if he leaves without her, their relationship will die and she will lose her chance to escape.

The scene I chose to perform happens after Pato has left for America. Maureen has just returned home after seeing him off. As his train was departing, he had asked her to marry him and move to America with him, but her obligation to her mother has kept her from going with him right away.

What initially caught my attention with *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* was the intense power (albeit ill-gotten) of Maureen. I see her as calmly demonic—the more power she has over her mother and the meaner she is to her, the calmer she gets. Back in England she had no power. When she lashed out wildly, that was what landed her in the asylum. Now, she overpowers her mother in the same way that she felt overpowered in England. When her mother has power enough to criticize Maureen, Maureen lashes out by taunting her with her (Maureen's) physical relationship with her boyfriend Pato, as an attempt to shock her mother into submission. When the mind games do not work, she inflicts physical violence. This has a calming effect on her. Where the arguing tends to aggravate Maureen, the violence gives her complete

dominion, security, and quietness. Even as her mother is screaming in pain, Maureen's head is quiet and clear—at least, that is what she thinks in her mad state.

This character required me to use an Irish dialect. The dialect is very much like the rolling hills of Ireland. It has a melodic sound to it that often has an upward inflection at the end of sentences—a pattern that contradicts the American tendency to down inflect at the end of everything except questions, and sometimes we even do it on questions. As with American dialects, the Irish dialect shifts in rhythm, musicality, tempo, etc. in different areas of the country. This means that the dialect in western Ireland would sound as different to southern Ireland as a Brooklyn accent might sound when compared to a Southern American accent.

Another difference between American English and Irish is the placement of the sound. Some dialects require a lot of jaw movement, others require a lot of lip movement, some hardly use the tongue when forming words, while others require a lot of tongue movement. Some dialects lie in the back of the throat, some in the middle of the mouth, while others are really far forward. Some dialects are spoken through the sides of the mouth, while others have a more vertical sound to them.

Americans tend to form their words in the center of their mouths. Southern Americans drop the sound clear to the back of their mouths to get that lazy drawl. Irish is a sound that is so far forward in the mouth that it has been described as a sound that bounces off the front teeth. I like to think of it as a sound that is so far forward that it spills out over my teeth like water overflowing its dam.

The Irish dialect is such a light, dancing sound that it made me want to make Maureen lighthearted and genteel, when that is hardly the case with such a character.

The sound needed to be gruff—fitting for the lower class of western Ireland—no breezy melody. Although, I still kept the melody in the lines, it was not as pronounced as it might be in other areas of Ireland. I also used a lower register of my voice and gave it a rougher quality, as well. This change created a character that sounded uneducated and hard. It also affected the way I carried myself in the scene. Instead of moving lightly across the floor, my steps were more rooted and firm. I also gripped more forcefully the fire poker that I carried throughout the scene.

MAUREEN: To Boston. To Boston I'll be going. Isn't that where them two were from, the Kennedy's, or was that somewhere else, now? Robert Kennedy I did prefer over Jack Kennedy. He seemed to be nicer to women. Although I haven't read up on it. / Boston. It does have a nice ring to it. Better than England it'll be, ^{better memories} I'm sure. Although where wouldn't be better than England? No shite I'll be cleaning there, anyways, and no names called, and Pato'll be there to have a say-so anyways if there was to be names called, but I'm sure there won't be. The Yanks do love the Irish. / Almost begged me, Pato did. Almost on his hands and knees, ~~he~~ was, near enough crying. At the station I caught him, not five minutes to spare, thanks to you. Thanks to your oul interfering. But too late to be interfering you are now. Oh aye. Be far too late, although you did give it a good go, I'll say that for you. Another five minutes and you'd have had it. Poor you. Poor selfish oul you. / Kissed the face off me, he did, when he saw me there. Them blue eyes of his. Them muscles. Them arms wrapping me. 'Why did you not answer me letter?' And all for coming over and giving you a good kick he was when I told him, but 'Ah no,' I said, 'isn't she just a feeble-minded oul woman, not worth dirtying your boots on?' I was defending you there. / 'You will come to Boston with me so, me love, when you get up the money.' 'I will, Pato. Be it married or be it living in sin, what do I care? What do I care if tongues'd be wagging? Tongues have wagged about me before, let them wag again. Let them never stop wagging, so long as I'm with you, Pato, what do I care about tongues? So long as it's you and me, and the warmth of us cuddled up is all I ever really wanted anyway.' / 'Except we do still have a problem, what to do with you oul mam, there,' he said. 'Would an oul folks home be too harsh?' 'It wouldn't be too harsh but it would be too expensive.' 'What about your sisters so?' 'Me sisters wouldn't have the bitch. Not even a half-day at Christmas to be with her can them two stand. They clear forgot her birthday this year as well as that.' 'How do you stick her without going off your rocker?' they do say to me. Behind her back, like. / 'Ill leave it up to yourself so,' Pato says. He was on the train be this, we was kissing out the window, like they do in films. 'I'll leave it up to yourself so, whatever you decide. If it takes a month, let it take a month. And if it's finally you decide you can't bear to be parted from her and have to stay behind, well, I can't say I would like it, but I'd understand. But if even a year it has to take for you to decide, it is a year I will be waiting, and won't be minding the wait.' / 'It won't be a year it is you'll be waiting, Pato', I called out then, the train was pulling away. 'It won't be a year nor yet nearly a year. It won't be a week.

Amber: slip out of chair

'Twas over the stile she did trip. Aye. And down the hill she did fall. Aye. Aye.

MARVIN'S ROOM

Scott McPherson wrote *Marvin's Room* in the late 1980s. The main theme of the play is the looming imminence of death, due to illness, and how willing each individual in this family of strangers may or may not be to make compromises to accommodate a family member they hardly know.

McPherson was well acquainted with the sadness of the possible loss of a loved one to disease. He had AIDS, as did his lover Danny, in the early years when there were no medicines to curb the onset of the disease. Two years after the premiere of *Marvin's Room*, both men lay in hospital beds next to one another, with lesions all over their bodies. Scott watched as Danny slowly wasted away due to all the lesions in his lungs. He had always feared the day that Danny died, and now it was happening. While this play is not a play about AIDS, McPherson's years of dealing with the knowledge of such a death sentence is evident as the family in *Marvin's Room* deals with a different kind of illness.

The play depicts two estranged sisters, Bessie and Lee. Bessie takes care of her elderly aunt and bedridden father. Lee is a single mother whose elder son, seventeen year old Hank, is in a mental institution for burning down their house. When Bessie learns that she has Leukemia and will need a bone marrow transplant, she must contact the only healthy family she knows—Lee.

Although Bessie is the main character of the play and has several powerful scenes, I chose to take on the role of Lee, because I had not really played a character like Lee before. Lee is impulsive and temperamental. She smokes, curses, and does not follow rules. No doubt her parenting skills have been called into question, but she

will defy anyone who might suggest it. She feels that she has done the best she could as a parent, and that Hank is simply a problem child. Subconsciously she might question this belief, but she does not dare admit it, because the guilt of such a truth would be too much for her to handle. She fears that she might break down from the guilt of being a horrible mother and then become unable to function at all, so she does what she needs to do to stay strong for her sons.

The scene that I chose is when Lee visits Hank in the mental institution in hopes of getting him to consent to give a sample of his bone marrow to see if he is a match for his aunt Bessie. She is nervous as she waits for his entrance. As Lee, I tried to brush off the nervousness by casually lighting up a cigarette, in full defiance of the No Smoking rule. It was a poor mask and the nervousness showed right through. My next tactic was to get the psychiatrist on my side by proving that I had always been a decent, hardworking mother to my boys, and that I was the victim of my son's cruelty. When Hank entered, what transpired was a delicate balance between my wanting to care for him, but fearing that I might expose my heart too much to him.

I also knew that I needed to control my temper for two reasons: 1) to make sure the psychiatrist did not think me a bad mother; and 2) to cajole Hank into consenting to the bone marrow sample. When he refused to give the sample, I lost my temper and yelled at him and then made childish and petty excuses as to why I did not have the time to visit him again any time soon. When Hank apologized for burning down the house, I was taken completely off guard. I would never have expected such an apology from Hank in my lifetime. My tactic of making Hank feel unimportant soon began to disintegrate as feelings of tenderness crept into my heart. As I

battled between my need to be tough and the pangs of mercy welling up within I made my exit.

I did not quite know how I wanted to block this scene. I knew that I wanted very simple and naturalistic movement. This is a contemporary play and I wanted it to seem as if the audience was a fly on the wall. Although I had ideas of physical movement in response to certain emotions within the scene, I did not quite know when I would feel compelled to execute the action. I wanted it to occur organically and logically. I did not want it to be movement for the sake of movement. The rehearsal process is useful for discovering timing for such things, but eventually, the actor must make a decision, so as not to confuse the other actors.

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DR. WALLY: Why don't we take this sample and you can get home to your father and your aunt.

BESSIE: All right.

(BOB enters.)

BOB: Coffee?

BESSIE: Oh, thank you.

(She takes the coffee. BOB exits. DR. WALLY raises her dress. BESSIE doesn't know what to do with the coffee.)

DR. WALLY: You can drink your coffee.

(BESSIE, standing, rapidly sips the too-hot coffee from the white styrofoam cup. DR. WALLY stands waiting, needle in hand. The lights fade to black as BESSIE repeatedly sips.)

Fissile
mam's
purse

Run the garment emotionally
be aware of Charlotte

SCENE FOUR

(An institutional visiting room. There are three chairs. A DOCTOR sits in one. LEE, a woman in her late thirties, sits in another.)

LEE: Do you mind if I smoke?

DR. CHARLOTTE: Yes. Thank you for asking.

LEE: How 'bout I blow it this way?

DR. CHARLOTTE: I'm afraid there's no smoking anywhere on this floor.

LEE: I'll be very quiet then. (She lights up. Pause. She looks at her watch.) I should have called, right?

DR. CHARLOTTE: They're getting him. He's in occupational therapy, which is in another building on the grounds.

LEE: Oh, I see.

DR. CHARLOTTE: It's good to see you here, Lee. May I call you Lee?

LEE: Sure.

DR. CHARLOTTE: We've missed you on other days. So has Hank.

LEE: I know. I wish I could visit more, but . . . well . . . you know.

DR. CHARLOTTE: Mm-hmm.

LEE: Now, you're not an orderly are you?

DR. CHARLOTTE: I'm a psychiatrist.

LEE: Are you who Hank talks to?

DR. CHARLOTTE: I'm in charge of his therapy. He talks to me and others on staff.

LEE: Well, you know he lies. I'm just telling you that—I mean, not because I think he's been saying bad things about me, but I'm sure he has been—I mean, I'm sure he has been—but you should know he lies to help you with his therapy.

DR. CHARLOTTE: Mm-hmm.

LEE: For instance, he told his guidance counselor at school that I beat him.

DR. CHARLOTTE: Mm-hmm.

LEE: So you see what I mean.

DR. CHARLOTTE: Mm-hmm.

LEE: Oh, see now, you're thinking, "Oh, I wonder if she *does* beat him."

DR. CHARLOTTE: Is that what you think I think?

LEE: Don't you?

DR. CHARLOTTE: Do you want me to think that?

LEE: What do you mean?

DR. CHARLOTTE: What do you think I mean?

LEE: What do you mean, "What do I think you mean?"?

DR. CHARLOTTE: What do you think I mean by "What do you think I mean?"?

(Pause.)

LEE: You wouldn't have an ashtray, would you?

(DR. CHARLOTTE takes a glass ashtray out and crosses to LEE.)

LEE: Do you want a drag?

(Pause.)

DR. CHARLOTTE: No. Here. *(She hands the ashtray to LEE.)* We'd like to have you become more involved in Hank's therapy. We'd like you to come more often for visits.

LEE: Doctor, can I be honest with you? What is your first name?

DR. CHARLOTTE: Charlotte.

LEE: Oh, my youngest boy's a Charlie.

DR. CHARLOTTE: Yes.

LEE: Charlotte. I've forced myself through school and I'm about to get my degree. I'm very picky now about the kind of man I'll go with. I keep—I used to keep a very clean house. Hank makes fun of my degree in cosmetology. He terrorizes any man I'm interested in. This last one, Lawrence, Hank made fun of his being on parole, made fun of the way he held his liquor, made fun of his Pinto. The point is, Hank cost me a potentially good relationship. And as for my house . . . Hank is not something I can control, so what is the point of my visiting?

DR. CHARLOTTE: He says he misses you.

(HANK enters. He is a big seventeen-year-old covered with motor grease.)

LEE: Look at you. You look like a pig.

HANK: I'm working on an engine.

LEE: Don't they let you shower?

HANK: They told me you were here and I was supposed to come here.

LEE: Don't sit down, Hank.

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(He sits.)

You'll get the chair all greasy. (*Slight pause.*) Are you behaving yourself?

HANK: They're not strapping me down anymore.

LEE: Well, don't abuse that privilege. You want an M&M?

I got some in my purse.

HANK: Where's Charlie? He didn't come?

LEE: He has a class in geometry.

HANK: He's already taken remedial geometry.

LEE: This is a make-up class in remedial geometry. (*To the DOCTOR:*) Charlie's not doing too well in school.

DR. CHARLOTTE: Mm-hmm.

LEE: They say it's because he reads too much. (*Offering the M&Ms:*) Do you want—

DR. CHARLOTTE: No, thank you.

LEE: So, are you behaving yourself?

HANK: I told you yes.

LEE: All right, I'm just asking.

HANK: So how come you're visiting?

LEE: What do you mean? I don't have to have a reason to visit.

HANK: Then how come you've never visited before?

LEE: I *have* visited before, but you were unconscious.

HANK: That doesn't count as a visit. How can it be a visit if I didn't know you were here?

LEE: I can't be responsible for when you're conscious or unconscious—I can only make the effort.

DR. CHARLOTTE: Mm-hmm.

LEE: Maybe if I knew you were going to be conscious for sure I would visit more often. Do you have some sort of schedule I could take with me?

DR. CHARLOTTE: Your son is off the Thorazine now. You should find him alert most any visiting day.

LEE: See, that's another thing. Saturdays are just about

ACT ONE SCENE FOUR 23

the worst for me. We're still living in the basement of the church because of our house, and on Saturday I help the nuns—since they took us in I feel I should do something around the place.

DR. CHARLOTTE: Mm-hmm.

LEE: On Saturdays the nuns roll out a sheet of dough and with this shot glass they cut out the—what do you call it?—the body-of-Christ thing they use for their communion. Now I'm not allowed to actually touch the dough, because I'm not a Catholic, but I make sure there's lots of flour spread out on the table so the body-of-Christ thing doesn't stick, because it's hell to clean up. You end up having to scrape it with your nails. And I keep count of how many bodies-of-Christ things they've made.

DR. CHARLOTTE: Communion hosts.

LEE: That's right. It's very relaxing. All the girls get to talking.

(HANK crosses to leave. DR. CHARLOTTE stops him and sits him down.)

DR. CHARLOTTE: Do you think the nuns would understand if you told them you needed to come visit your son?

LEE: I'm here today, aren't I?

DR. CHARLOTTE: Yes.

(LEE offers HANK a M&M, then puts it in his mouth.)

LEE: I did come up here to tell you something—your hands are too greasy—though I was planning on coming today anyway. *stay seated*

HANK: What?

LEE: Well, now, it's not good news, but your doctor thinks

it's all right to tell you because, partially, I've got no choice.

HANK: What?

LEE: You know your Aunt Bessie down in Florida. Well, she's got leukemia and I guess she's not doing too well and there's a possibility she might die.

HANK: Who?

LEE: Your Aunt Bessie.

HANK: I didn't know I had an Aunt Bessie.

LEE: Sure you did. My sister. Your aunt. She lives down in Florida.

HANK: This is the first I've heard of her.

LEE: She's been to the house.

HANK: When?

LEE: Right after your dad and I got married.

HANK: I wasn't born yet.

LEE: Oh, I guess you weren't. Well, I know I've mentioned her. She's my sister.

HANK: I didn't know you had a sister.

LEE: You know how at Christmas I always say, "It looks like Bessie didn't send a card this year either"?"

HANK: Oh, yeah.

LEE: That's your Aunt Bessie, my sister.

HANK: Okay.

LEE: And she's dying.

HANK: Okay. Are there anymore M&Ms?

LEE: Sure. *(She puts one in his mouth.)* Since we're her nearest relatives they want us to get tested to see if our bone marrow is compatible because they could maybe save her life if they do a bone marrow transplant.

HANK: Yeah?

LEE: They wanted us to fly to Florida but we can't afford that. So we're going to arrange the tests up here and send them down. Okay?

HANK: Why don't we go to Florida?

LEE: Because we don't have any money, Hank. It's a really simple test, they say. And it's not supposed to hurt much.

HANK: What if I don't want to do it?

LEE: What do you mean?

HANK: I don't know her. Why should I let them do anything to me?

LEE: This is my sister we are talking about. And maybe I haven't mentioned her to you before, but that doesn't mean that she isn't on my mind a lot, and we are not going to just let her die because you want to have one of your moods. Do you understand? Now they say they can do your test up here, so . . .

(HANK has walked away and turned his back to her.)

Well, I have to go. It's good to see you, Hank.

HANK: You coming next week?

LEE: I don't know. It's Feast of the Ascension. It gets kind of busy.

DR. CHARLOTTE: Hank, is there anything you want to say to your mother?

LEE: Will it take long? Because I am already late.

HANK: No, I just—well, I'm really sorry I burnt the house down.

LEE: Is that it? 'Cause I am really late. Okay, Hank. Well, you be good now. I'd leave you these *(she indicates the M&Ms)* but they're Charlie's. I just took them with me for the drive. Here, I'll leave you some here. Then when you get cleaned up you can come back for them. *(She pours out some M&Ms onto the seat of the chair.)* Okay, well, we'll see you, and Bessie's doctor should be calling you.

DR. CHARLOTTE: We'll be waiting.

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(LEE exits.)

DR. CHARLOTTE: Well . . . *(She takes out a cigarette, lights it, and takes a deep drag.)* Good session.

(Blackout.)



Laura Esterman as Bessie.



Karl Maschek as Charlie.

*All photos of the 1991 Playwrights Horizons
production by Marc Rosencranz.*

THE MAN I LOVE

(A Dance)

The Man I Love is one of the countless songs that George Gershwin composed with his older brother Ira as lyricist. George started playing the piano at the age of ten when his parents acquired a piano for Ira to practice on. George's talent showed immediately as he started playing songs by ear. As he got older, he studied a variety of piano techniques. His first professional job as a pianist was at a publishing company where his job was to play pieces of sheet music for prospective buyers. During this time, George began publishing his own music, several pieces of which became instant hits.

The Man I Love was the result of his collaboration with his brother Ira in 1924 on the musical *Lady Be Good*. The brothers continued to produce music for dozens of musicals, including *Funny Face*(1927), *Strike Up the Band*(1927 & 1930), and *Girl Crazy*(1930), all of which transferred over to the movies a little over a decade later.

Gershwin's main influence for his music came from early twentieth century French composers. He even wanted to study under the famous French composer Maurice Ravel at one point, but eventually decided against it. He did, however, live in Paris for a short period of time, where he wrote *An American In Paris*. Along with this well-known piece of music, other popular Gershwin tunes are *I Got Rhythm*, *Rhapsody In Blue*, *'Swonderful*, *But Not for Me*, *Let's Call the Whole Thing Off*, *Strike Up the Band*, *They Can't Take That Away From Me*, *(I'll Build A)Stairway to Paradise*, *Nice Work If You Can Get It*, and *Someone to Watch Over Me*.

George Gershwin died of a brain tumor at the age of thirty eight. In his short life he was able to compose so many songs that became so popular that they have become a defining factor of American culture. Some of his songs are so ingrained into our culture that people hum his tunes without realizing who wrote them or where they came from, because they just seem to have always been around.

I had not planned to do any dancing in my senior project. Having taken the very first dance class in my life just four semesters ago, I did not feel up to the challenge. I knew that if I were to take on a dance scene, it would be one of my most difficult accomplishments of the project. My theory proved true. It came second in difficulty only to *The Bald Soprano*. I told myself that if I found a piece of music that grabbed me from the moment I heard it, then I would do a dance scene; otherwise, no. *The Man I Love* drew my attention right away, but I still shied away from committing to it. After a month more of searching, I finally decided to set a dance to *The Man I Love*.

The version of *The Man I Love* that I used was from the 1940s; therefore, my inspiration for the style of dance came from the old musical movies of the 1940s and 1950s. First, I wrote a simple plot of a woman searching for a man to be her own. After she has exhausted all avenues and her efforts have proven fruitless, she is ready to give up. Then suddenly, a new man enters the picture, giving her one more chance for hope.

For the choreography, I was unsure where to begin. I knew that I wanted to do partnered dancing. However, being so new to dance, I knew only the most basic of dance steps, and nothing at all of ballroom dance. I did not really know what dance

moves existed or how to execute them once I discovered them. I tend to have to break them down into small movements and master them before putting them back together into the whole dance steps.

In the beginning, I had general movement patterns in mind but did not know what specific dance moves to put into those general patterns of movement. As I watched the countless dance scenes in the old musicals, I found certain steps that I liked and then ultimately tried to incorporate them into my own choreography. The challenge that awaited me after that was to actually perform the dance steps. Since I am relatively new to dance, struggling at times with the execution of the dance steps, I knew that I could not do a serious performance without the audience laughing at me. Therefore, I choreographed a comedic dance with which the audience would not feel uncomfortable in their laughter.

As with *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I used various levels. What made it difficult was the fact that I had to climb up and down the various levels in a skirt and high heeled shoes. This is where the dress rehearsals became extremely valuable. A few simple dress rehearsals revealed where I had to take special care with my feet so as not to trip over the skirt or step on it.

The Man I Love
George Gershwin

Someday he'll come along, the man I love.
And he'll be big and strong, the man I love.
And when he comes my way,
I'll do my best to make him stay.

He'll look at me and smile; I'll understand.
And in a little while, he'll take my hand.
And though it seems absurd,
I know we both won't say a word.

Maybe I shall meet him Sunday,
Maybe Monday, maybe not.
Still I'm sure to meet him someday;
Maybe Tuesday will be my good news day.

We'll build a little home
Just meant for two.
From which I'll never roam;
Who would, would you?
And so all else above,
I'm waiting for the man I love.

He'll build a little home
Just meant for two.
From which I'll never roam;
Who would, would you?
And so all else above,

I'm waiting for the man I love. / *up on every corner*

THE LONELY WAY

The Lonely Way is set at the turn of the twentieth century. It was a time of more formal appearance. People still changed into nice clothes in the evening for dinner and strolled through their gardens on their daily walks. Men and women both wore corsets and clothing that kept them physically restricted to the point that all of their movements appeared prim.

The play's author, Arthur Schnitzler, was born in Austria in 1862. He began writing as a child, first with poetry. He later progressed to short stories and then to plays. His father was a throat specialist, and Arthur had gone to school to become a doctor, too, but he found himself so drawn to his writing that he decided to quit the medical field and devote himself to writing.

He lived a sexually free life—what one might call promiscuous. This may have evidenced itself in two of the characters in *The Lonely Way*. Written in 1904 and entitled *Der Einsame Weg* in his native tongue, the play's central character is an artist in the midst of a professional slump, who decides to visit an old family with whom he has always been close. He has been such a *close* friend of the family that he actually fathered a son, unbeknownst to everyone, with the mother of the family. His reason for visiting the family is to reveal to the now 23 year old young man that he is his real father.

Another man in the play, Sala, is a similar character. He is in his forties, has never been married and has lived a life basically for himself. He is now ailing and everybody knows that he may not live to see another year. He plans to go on a highly

dangerous excavation expedition in a far off country very shortly, so either way, everybody knows they will never see him again.

A young woman named Johanna has feelings for this older gentleman. Johanna is a flighty girl, with a determination that cannot be opposed. Her mother hopes that Johanna will find a nice man to settle her down, but Johanna has already decided on Sala.

The scene I chose is near the end of the play and involves Sala and Johanna. They are in Sala's garden and their dialogue regarding his imminent expedition has a deeper meaning of a much longer farewell than his just going away for a year. Johanna knows that he will not be returning home ever again.

For this, the quietest scene of the six, I made the movement considerably more subtle and the rhythms slower as the characters spoke in a contemplative manner. We also wore costumes in this scene. Where the other scenes were in basic blacks, this scene found us in a suit for Sala and a white dress for Johanna. Even a simple change of costume can greatly affect the way the actor portrays a character. The formal feel that these costumes gave us, made us carry ourselves more formally and use our hands in a way more fitting to the early 1900s.

The Lonely Way is very Chekhovian. The characters in Chekhov's plays never seem to grow. They talk about wanting to change and improve their lives, yet they stay the same while the rest of the world changes. Life passes them by and they are ill prepared for the new world at their doorstep. Although it does not follow the same four-act structure as Chekhov's plays, *The Lonely Way* still manages to create the same feeling of circular progression. The characters want to take action to make their

lives better, but the decisions they end up making are more than likely to make their lives more miserable. Also, as with Chekhov's plays, everyone in *The Lonely Way* tends to live in their own self-absorbed worlds, thus causing a breakdown of true communication, leaving them all alone in their individual worlds. Hence the title: *The Lonely Way*. Living for oneself is the loneliest way to live.

JULIA: Sometimes, yes. But it's in those moments that you realize nothing is really lost—it's here again in the present. And the present is becoming the past. *(He sits down on the bench.)*

JOHANNA: What do you mean?

JULIA covers his eyes with his hands and sits on the bench.

JOHANNA: What's the matter? Where are you?

A light wind stirs the leaves, and many fall to the ground.

JULIA: I'm a little boy riding my pony across an open field. My father calls to me. My mother is waiting at the window, waving, with a gray silk shawl wrapped over her dark hair. I'm a young lieutenant standing on top of a hill announcing to my superiors that enemy soldiers are lurking behind theicket, ready to attack, and below I see bayonets and buttons gleaming in the noontime sun. I'm lying alone in a drifting canoe looking into the dark blue summer sky, and unspeakably beautiful words are forming in my mind—more beautiful than any I was ever able to put on paper. I'm resting on a bench in a balmy park, and Helen is sitting next to me; and under the magnolia tree Lilli is playing with a blonde English boy, and I hear them laughing and chattering. I'm talking through rustling leaves with Julian and we're talking about a painting: two old sailors with weatherbeaten faces sitting on an overturned boat, gazing sadly out at the finite sea. And I feel their misery more deeply than the painter who painted them, more deeply than they themselves would feel if they were really alive. And all that, all that, is here in the present—All I have to do is close my eyes and all that is closer to me than you are, Johanna, if I don't see you and you remain silent.

JOHANNA is looking at him wistfully.

SALA: The present—what is that, anyway? Can we embrace a moment like we clasp a friend in our arms—or an enemy who's pressing against us? Isn't a word already a memory the moment it's spoken? Isn't the note that begins a tune already a memory even before the song ends? Isn't your entrance into this garden already a memory, isn't it as much a part of the past as the footsteps of those who died long ago?

JOHANNA: No, it can't be that way. It's too sad.

SALA: *(Back in the present again.)* Why?... It's at times like this that we know we can never really lose anything.

JOHANNA: If only you had forgotten and lost everything—and I could be everything to you now!

SALA: *(Somewhat astonished.)* Johanna!—

JOHANNA: *(Passionately.)* I love you!

(Pause.)

SALA: In a few days I'll be gone, Johanna. You know that.

JOHANNA: Yes, of course I know that. Are you afraid that I'm suddenly going to clutch at you like a simpering girl with dreams of eternal love?—No, that's not my way. But I wanted to tell you that I love you. I'm allowed to do that just once, aren't I?—Do you hear? I love you! And I hope you'll hear it one day just as I'm saying it now—at a moment just as beautiful as this one... a moment in which we'll no longer exist for each other at all.

SALA: Johanna, you can be sure of one thing: the sound of your voice will never leave me— But why are we talking about parting forever? We'll see each other again... perhaps in three years... or in five... *(Smiling.)* Perhaps by that time you'll be a princess, and I'll be the king of some buried city... Johanna—what are you thinking?

(JOHANNA pulls the cape closer around her.)

SALA: Are you cold?

JOHANNA: No.—But I have to go.

SALA: You're in a hurry?

JOHANNA: It's getting late. I want to be home before Father gets back.

SALA: How strange!—Today you're hurrying home so as not to worry your father, and in a few days...

JOHANNA: He won't be expecting me then. Goodbye, Stephan.

SALA: Until tomorrow, then.

JOHANNA: Yes, until tomorrow. Goodbye then.

(They begin to walk away together.)

SALA: Listen, Johanna— what if I asked you to stay?

JOHANNA: No, I have to go.

SALA: No, I mean, what if I asked you to stay with me—for... a long time.

JOHANNA: You have a strange way of joking.

SALA: I'm not joking.

JOHANNA: Are you forgetting that you're... going away?

SALA: There's nothing to prevent me from staying if I don't want to go.

JOHANNA: You'd stay for my sake?

SALA: I didn't say that. Perhaps for my own.

JOHANNA: Oh no, you mustn't give up the trip. You would never forgive me if I kept you from going.

SALA: Do you think so? *(Watching her intently.)* What if we both went?

JOHANNA: What?

SALA: I'm asking if you'd like to come with me... as my wife, of course, since we must consider formalities.

JOHANNA: You want me to—

SALA: Why does that move you so much?

JOHANNA: With you?... With you?

SALA: Don't misunderstand me, Johanna. You wouldn't have to be tied to me forever. We could simply say goodbye to each other when we came back—if we wanted to. I know I can't fulfill all your dreams—I know that very well... You don't have to tell me now. I wouldn't want you to say anything you might regret.

JOHANNA: *(Has been looking at him as though she wanted to drink in his words.)* No, I won't say anything... I won't say anything at all.

SALA: *(Gives her a long look.)* Think about it and let me know in the morning.

JOHANNA: Yes. *(She looks at him for a long time.)*

SALA: What is it?

JOHANNA: Nothing. Till tomorrow. Goodbye now.

(He escorts her through the garden door and she exits.)

SALA: *(Comes back and stops at the pond.)* As if I were trying to find her reflection...

(He stares at the ground in front of him. JULIAN enters and breaks the silence.)

JULIAN: And you want to leave this glorious place so soon?

SALA: Hopefully, I'll be coming back, Julian.

JULIAN: I hope so too—for both our sakes.

SALA: You say that as though you doubt it...

lightforward relation: to one another.
I can't begin to feel I'm someone other
than the person I thought I was before to—
The truth you tell me has no power...
void dream would mean more to me than
story of the distant past. Nothing has
changed...nothing. The memory of my
mother is as sacred to me as it was before.
I the man in whose house I was born,
man who cared for me and loved me in
childhood and my youth, and who—
loved my mother—that man means just
much to me now as he did before—per-
haps even more.

IAN: And yet, Felix, however little
either this truth may have for you now—
there is one thing that you cannot deny: it
is as my son that your mother bore you...

IX: Cursing you.

IAN: ...And as my son that she raised
me...

IX: Hating you.

IAN: At first, yes. Then forgiving me,
finally—don't forget this—as my friend.
And on her last evening what did she talk
to you about?—About those days when she
experienced the greatest joy a woman can
experience.

IX: And the greatest misery.

IAN: Do you think she didn't know that
it would come and ask to see that paint-
ing... Do you think your request was any-
thing other than your mother's last greeting
to me?—Do you understand, Felix?... And
very minute—don't deny it—you can
see—the painting you held in your hand
today, the painting in which your mother
looks at you—looks at you the same way
she looked at me on the brilliant and sacred
day she lay in my arms and conceived you.
It did not matter what you feel now, what
doubt and confusion, you now know
the truth; your mother herself wanted you

to know it, and it's no longer possible for
you to forget that you're my son.

FELIX: Your son—that's only a word. An
echo in the void—I look at you, I know it,
but I can't grasp it.

JULIAN: Felix!

FELIX: No. Now that I know, you've be-
come more of a stranger to me than you were
before. *(He turns away.)*

ACT IV

*HERR VON SALA's garden. His white
ground-level villa is on the left; it has a wide
terrace with six stone steps leading into the gar-
den. A wide glass-paneled door leads from the
terrace into the salon. In the foreground is a
small pond surrounded by a semicircle of young
trees. A tree-lined path runs from here diag-
onally across to stage right. At the beginning of
the path, near the pond, are two columns each
topped with the marble bust of a Roman em-
peror. A semicircular high-backed stone bench
is under the trees on the right of the pond. In
the background, there is a slender fence, barely
visible through thinning shrubbery. Behind the
fence a wood now in autumn colors begins a
gentle climb upwards. A pale blue autumn sky
is above. Quiet. —The stage remains empty
for a time.*

*SALA and JOHANNA enter from the terrace.
JOHANNA is dressed in black, and SALA
wears a gray suit with a dark overcoat thrown
over his shoulder. —They're slowly coming
down the stairs.*

SALA: Isn't it a little chilly for you?

*(He puts his coat around JOHANNA's shoul-
ders. They slowly descend into the garden.)*

JOHANNA: You know what I'm think-
ing...? That this is our day—that it belongs
to us alone. We called it up, and if we wanted
to, we could keep it... Everyone else is just a
guest in our world today. Don't you agree? I

suppose it's because you once forecast this
day.

SALA: I did?

JOHANNA: Yes... when Mother was still
alive... And now it's here. The leaves are red,
a golden mist is hanging over the woods,
and the sky is pale and distant, just as you
said... and the day is even more beautiful
and more melancholy than I could ever have
imagined. And I'm spending it in your gar-
den, my reflection in your pond. *(She stands
looking down into the pond.)* And yet we can
no more preserve this golden day than this
water can hold my image after I'm gone.

SALA: It's strange—this balmy air already
hints of winter and snow.

JOHANNA: What do you care? When that
hint becomes a reality, you'll be long gone
into another spring.

SALA: What do you mean?

JOHANNA: Well, there isn't a winter like
ours where you're going, is there?

SALA: *(Pensively.)* No, not like ours. *(Pause.)*
And what will you do, after I'm gone?

*(JOHANNA looks at him. He's looking into
the distance.)*

JOHANNA: Haven't you been gone for a
long time? And aren't you quite far away from
me even now?

SALA: What are you talking about? I'm right
here... What will you do, Johanna?

JOHANNA: I'm going away—like you.

(SALA shakes his head.)

JOHANNA: Soon. While I still have the
courage. Who knows what would become
of me if I stayed here?

SALA: As long as you're still young, every
door is open, and the world waits for you
behind each one of them.

JOHANNA: It's only when you're on your
own that the world is... and skies are in-
finite. That's why I want to go away.

SALA: That's easier said than done. To ac-
tually do it, you have to make preparations
and have a plan. You talk as if all you had to
do was sprout wings and fly into the dis-
tance.

JOHANNA: To be determined to do it—is
the same as having wings.

SALA: Aren't you afraid, Johanna?

JOHANNA: There's a little bit of fear in
any desire worth having.

SALA: Where will it lead you?

JOHANNA: I'll find my way.

SALA: You can choose the road you travel,
but not who you'll meet on the way.

JOHANNA: You think I don't know that
all of my experiences won't be wonderful? I
know that some will be ugly and common.

SALA: And how will you bear that?... Will
you be able to?

JOHANNA: I don't intend to be as honest
with everyone as I am with you. I'll lie—
and I'll do it with pleasure. I won't always be
happy and I won't always be sensible. I'll
make mistakes and I'll suffer. That's how it
has to be.

SALA: You know all this in advance, and
still...

JOHANNA: Yes.

SALA: But why?... Why do you want to go
away?

JOHANNA: Because I want to look back
on my life one day and shudder—as you
can only do when you've tried everything.
Just as you must feel when you look back on
your life. Isn't that right?

CONCLUSION

The entire process of getting my senior project on its feet, the whole technical end of it, and everything else that went into the project, was a lesson and a test all at once. As a result, I have a much clearer understanding of the energies, responsibility, and preparation that any production requires. The scale varies, of course, depending on how big or small the production is.

No doubt, I still have much to learn, but what I have learned already in such a short amount of time makes me confident that I can make some contribution to future productions, and eventually learn that which I do not yet know.

Due to my professors' care and concern about my academic progress, my educational experience at USU has been the richest one that I have had thus far. My goal now is to move on to a graduate program to further my experience and connections in the theatre as an actor and writer. My experience at USU and with the Honors program has prepared me for the workload and busy days that a graduate program in theatre will demand. With that valuable experience coupled with my determination, I feel confident in my future success.

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