



# MAGIC/BIRD

BY ERIC SIMONSON



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of MAGIC/BIRD is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission for which must be secured from the Author's agent in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for MAGIC/BIRD are controlled exclusively by DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., and paying the requisite fee.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to Creative Artists Agency, 405 Lexington Avenue, 19th floor, New York, NY 10174. Attn: Chris Till.

#### **SPECIAL NOTE**

Anyone receiving permission to produce MAGIC/BIRD is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author. The following acknowledgments must appear on the title page in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play:

The Original Broadway production of MAGIC/BIRD was presented by  
Fran Kirmser, Tony Ponturo  
W. Scott McGraw, John Mara, Jr., Tamera Tunie/Jeffrey Donovan  
Friends of Magic Bird  
in association with The National Basketball Association

#### **SPECIAL NOTE ON NBA MATERIALS**

For permission to use footage, uniforms, logos or any other materials which are the property of the National Basketball Association, inquiries should be directed to the Kirmser/Ponturo Group LLC, 10 Rockefeller Center, Suite 910, New York, NY 10020. Tel. 212-554-3430, Fax 212-554-3433.

#### **SPECIAL NOTE ON SONGS AND RECORDINGS**

For performances of copyrighted songs, arrangements or recordings mentioned in this Play, the permission of the copyright owner(s) must be obtained. Other songs, arrangements or recordings may be substituted provided permission from the copyright owner(s) of such songs, arrangements or recordings is obtained; or songs, arrangements or recordings in the public domain may be substituted.

*This is for Robert Sr. and Doris P.*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

Before we even got to casting *MAGIC/BIRD* for its premiere production on Broadway, the press and, well, just about everyone, had the same question: How are you going to cast Larry Bird and Magic Johnson, two very recognizable — and tall — human beings? I had actually asked that same question to myself long before I started writing and decided the only solution was to make the play as theatrical as I could, leaving looks, tallness and basketball ability up to the collective imagination of the audience. That's why the opening scene, with its production-specific introductions; that's why the very few actors playing many characters; that's why the on-stage scene and costume changes. The more theatrical this play is made, the "poorer" the theatre, the better.

This includes the media design. At times, particularly during descriptions of key games, I ask for slides, footage, diagrams and/or animation. Most of these real events are available (for a price) from their respective sources, but I'm all in favor of the director, actors and designers using their collective imaginations to express these historical "moments in time" in a theatrical fashion. Please feel free to knock yourselves out.

This play, to rehearse and put on, was a blast. And that's the way it should be. *MAGIC/BIRD* is an expression of our culture's collective sense of sport, fun and, well, Magic. I had a terrific team to help me realize what I'd seen and heard in my head. Thomas Kail, the director, is a master at getting the most out of talented actors and putting on a theatrical show. And I couldn't have asked for a better ensemble (team) when it came to spirit, commitment and generosity, than I had with Deirdre "Didi" O'Connell, Peter Scolari, Francois Battiste, Rob Manning Jr., Kevin Daniels and Tug Coker, the latter two playing, respectively, Magic and Larry. And both, coincidentally, tall (though that's not required).

—ES

MAGIC/BIRD received its Broadway premiere at the Longacre Theatre on April 11, 2012. It was directed by Thomas Kail; the set design was by David Korins; the costume design was by Paul Tazewell; the lighting design was by Howell Binkley; the media design was by Jeff Sugg; the sound design was by Nevin Steinberg; and the hair and wig design were by Charles G. LaPointe. The cast was as follows:

LARRY BIRD . . . . . Tug Coker  
EARVIN “MAGIC” JOHNSON . . . . . Kevin Daniels  
PAT RILEY/RED AUERBACH/JERRY BUSS/  
TOM/BOB WOOLF . . . . . Peter Scolari  
DINAH BIRD/PATRICIA MOORE/SHELLY/  
HALEY/GEORGIA BIRD . . . . . Deirdre O’Connell  
HENRY ALVARADO/CEDRIC MAXWELL/NORM NIXON/  
FRANK/MICHAEL COOPER/JEFF . . . . . Robert Manning Jr.  
WILLY/BRYANT GUMBEL/JON LENNOX/  
BYRON SCOTT/RON BAXTER . . . . . Francois Battiste

## CHARACTERS

LARRY BIRD

EARVIN "MAGIC" JOHNSON

RED AUERBACH (white male, 40 – 60)

PAT RILEY

JERRY BUSS

TOM

BOB WOOLF

GEORGIA (white female, 25 – 40)

DINAH BIRD

PATRICIA MOORE

SHELLY

GEORGIA BIRD

HENRY ALVARADO (black male, 30 – 40)

CEDRIC MAXWELL

NORM NIXON

FRANK

MICHAEL COOPER

JEFF

JON LENNOX

WILLY

BRYANT GUMBEL

RON BAXTER

BYRON SCOTT

# MAGIC/BIRD

*The six actors of the play come onto the stage one by one and go to their posts on and around the playing area — stations from which they will make cursory costume changes. As they enter, we begin to hear a bed of arena sfx: crowd, sound checks, music, etc. Media: images emerge, front and rear projected: basketball players running up and down the court, basketballs, oversized and otherwise, seem to break the fourth wall and ricochet back on stage.*

TV ANNOUNCER. *(Voiceover.) — Now here's Magic down the middle and — whoa! No-look pass to Rambis! — Off to Bird, Larry to McHale for two! And a foul! (Cheers.)*

THEATER ANNOUNCER. *(Voiceover.) Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the Longacre Theatre and this evening's performance of *Magic/Bird*. Tonight, playing the multiple roles of Michael Cooper, Henry Alvarado and Frank, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_! (Cheers. Actor playing Henry waves, then continues to prep for the play. Highlights continue. We see some amazing shots, but mainly tremendous all-around play — ball handling, impossible passes, assists and rebounds.)*

TV ANNOUNCER. *(Voiceover.) — What a great block by Wilkins. Now the pass thrown away by Ewing, intercepted by Cooper, to Magic, slam dunk over Ewing! What a beautiful play by Magic!*

THEATER ANNOUNCER. *(Voiceover.) And performing the roles of Georgia Bird, Dinah Bird, and Shelly, is Ms. \_\_\_\_\_. (Actor playing Georgia acknowledges the audience.)*

TV ANNOUNCER. *(Voiceover.) — D.J. again to make the inbound pass. They're double teaming Bird. Larry, fake, fall away, hits it at the buzzer. Ah-ha-right! Unbelievable.*

THEATER ANNOUNCER. *(Voiceover.) Playing Willy, Jon Lennox, Ron Baxter, and Bryant Gumbel please welcome Mr.*

\_\_\_\_\_! (*Actor playing Willy waves.*) In the roles of Doctor Jerry Buss, Pat Riley and Red Auerbach, Mr.

\_\_\_\_\_! (*Actor playing Red steps down and nods.*)  
*Now actor playing Larry moves into place and imitates/shadows the action of the real Larry Bird in an archival clip.*

TV ANNOUNCER. (*Voiceover.*) — *Boston with fourteen seconds on the clock. Top of the key, Larry, spins, drives — got it!*

THEATER ANNOUNCER. (*Voiceover.*) Ladies and Gentlemen, playing Larry Bird, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. (*Actor playing Larry waves and then retreats to the upstage area, where he gets into place for the first scene. Actor playing Magic steps down and mimics the “archival Magic” in a clip.*)

TV ANNOUNCER. (*Voiceover.*) — *Magic the other way trailing by one. Magic a three-sixty turn, left hand lay-up is good, and it was not an easy shot!*

THEATER ANNOUNCER. (*Voiceover.*) And in the role of Magic Johnson, please welcome Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. (*Cheers. Actor playing Magic acknowledges the audience with a small bow and returns to his post.*)

TV ANNOUNCER. (*Voiceover.*) Ladies and Gentlemen, your cast of *Magic/Bird*! (*An infectious rock-and-roll anthem, up loud. Cheers and music crescendo, and then cut out. A phone rings. Lights up on the Bird Boston home, and Larry, 35, lying on his stomach on the floor. It is 1991.*)

LARRY. Dinah! (*The phone continues ringing.*) Dinah! (*He tries to get up, winces in pain. Dinah Bird, Larry’s wife, pretty, also mid-30s, runs past Larry from one side of the stage to the other.*)

DINAH. I got it, I got it, relax.

LARRY. Just answer the phone, please. (*In a separate light, on the periphery, Willy, 30s, African-American, a Celtics fan.*)

I remember exactly where I was.

DINAH. Don’t forget, you’ve got three hours till tip-off.

LARRY. I know. (*She disappears. Pat Riley, white, Lakers’ head coach, appears. Ringing stops.*)

WILLY. The Park Street T platform waiting for the train back to Cambridge.

RILEY. At first I wasn’t able to speak.

WILLY. Some dude was talking about it. I couldn’t believe it, so I had to ask.

LARRY. Who is it? (*Henry Alvarado, 40s, suit, an NBA rep, joins Willy and Pat.*)



RILEY. There's not much I remember about that week.

HENRY. I'd like to forget it.

RILEY. But that moment?

HENRY. That day.

LARRY. *(He rolls over to one side.)* Ah!

RILEY. Where I was, what words were said?

LARRY. Okay, this is bad.

HENRY. I heard it on the radio. I was in my car.

RILEY. Permanently etched in my brain.

LARRY. My back.

WILLY. I felt sick to my stomach.

LARRY. Dinah! I got angry.

HENRY. I had to pull over. *(Dinah reenters with a humongous phone.)*

WILLY. Then I started to cry.

DINAH. It's Lon. He says it's urgent. *(Larry looks at her.)* Don't kill the messenger. *(He takes the phone.)*

RILEY. Nothing was the same after that. *(Lights collapse to just Larry and Dinah.)*

LARRY. Hello ... uh-huh ... *(Larry listens a good while. He sits straight upright on reflex.)* Ah! *(Dinah stands there, taking in his pain.)*

DINAH. What's going on? *(Larry attempts to stand, this time slowly.)*

LARRY. Tell him to — no. Tell him to call me, I'll wait here till he does. *(Lights shift to Earvin Magic Johnson, 32, holding a phone, opposite side of the stage. Both he and Larry's voices sound as if they are coming from a phone receiver.)*

EARVIN. Hey L.B.

LARRY. You okay? *(Media: Dim, going brighter, archival footage of the L.A. Forum press conference room. Reporters mill as NBA Lakers VIPs file into the room: Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, David Stern, Kurt Rambis and Earvin.)*

EARVIN. I'm still kinda, you know, processing. But I got, uh, I got support.

LARRY. How's Cookie?

EARVIN. Doc gave her a clean bill of health.

LARRY. Okay.

EARVIN. She's hanging in.

LARRY. That's good.

EARVIN. This is not the AIDS disease, Larry. I have the HIV virus. *(Sound accent; camera flashes take over the stage along with the*

*buzz and commotion of a raucous press conference. Lights on Earvin and Larry fade. Media: Earvin stands behind a lectern and addresses the press in jump cuts //.)*

TV EARVIN. *First of all, let me say good after — good after — late afternoon. Um. Because of the um ... the HIV virus I have ah-tained, I will ... have to retire from the Lakers, uh. Today. // I plan on going on, living for a long time, bugging you guys like I always have. // I plan on being with the Lakers and the league, hopefully David a have me, for a while, um, and going on with my life. // And uh, I just want to say that-ah, I'm going to miss playing. (Media: Image freezes as lights come up full on Dinah, who holds a winter coat for Larry.)*

DINAH. You okay?

LARRY. I feel like something just happened, like, something just snapped.

DINAH. It's almost five, Larry. You're going to be late for the game.

LARRY. First time I can ever remember, I don't feel like playing. *(Blast of sound, images: a scoreboard clock counting down seconds; fans cheering, in states of revelry; celebrants rushing a basketball court. Title slide: "13 years earlier.")*

ANNOUNCER. *(Voiceover.) It's all over! Michigan State University, National Champions, nineteen-seventy-nine. (Lights shift. Title slide: National Championship, Michigan State vs. Indiana State.) And a despondent Larry Bird — shocked, the ruination of a perfect season, shattered — can do nothing but put his head under a towel and despair. While Michigan fans rush the court and the Spartan Players celebrate. In this, the most anticipated game in the history of college basketball. (Magic Johnson, now in his 1979 Michigan State Uniform, meets Bryant Gumbel at the edge of the court.)*

BRYANT. This is Bryant Gumbel with a very happy Magic Johnson. Super ball game, Magic. Not only were you a leader on offense, I thought you did a great job on Larry Bird in the zone tonight.

EARVIN. Yes. Coach gave us a good game plan, to go against Larry Bird and all we had was to go out and do it. And that's what we done. Now I've got a high school state championship and a college championship.

BRYANT. Which begs the question, Magic, the one on everyone's minds. You're a sophomore, you have two more years of eligibility. Will you be returning to Michigan State next year or will you be entering the draft?

EARVIN. There are a lot of things to think about, but for now I'm

# MAGIC/BIRD

by Eric Simonson

5M, 1W

MAGIC/BIRD is the inspiring true story of basketball legends Earvin “Magic” Johnson and Larry Bird, their rivalry and touching friendship.

*“On the one hand, we have Earvin ‘Magic’ Johnson: African-American, gregarious and charming, embracing his fame in the flashy fashion typical of his L.A. team, the Lakers. On the other, there’s Larry Bird: the white hick from French Lick, Ind., laconic and reserved, the main man of Boston’s Celtics and their working-class fans ... The scenes between the two are often quite funny ... And unlike many real-life dramas, this story doesn’t have a tragic ending.”*

—The New York Post

*“Phenomenal! Outstanding! They nailed it, like a Bird three-pointer at the buzzer ... Basketball heaven for anyone who appreciated the life and times of Earvin ‘Magic’ Johnson and Larry Bird.”*

—The Huffington Post

*“A razzle-dazzle passion play.”*

—Entertainment Weekly

*“MAGIC/BIRD’s got game!”*

—The Boston Herald

**Also by Eric Simonson**

BANG THE DRUM SLOWLY  
LOMBARDI

WORK SONG: THREE VIEWS OF  
FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT (Hatcher)

**DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.**

ISBN 978-0-8222-2801-1

