



THE ELECTRIC BABY
BY STEFANIE ZADRAVEC



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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*For my mother, who enjoyed my stories
and whose stories I loved.*

THE ELECTRIC BABY received its world premiere at Quantum Theatre (Karla Boos, Artistic Director) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on April 4, 2012. It was directed by Daniella Topol; the set design was by Stephanie Mayer-Staley; the costume design was by Richard Parsakian; the lighting design was by C. Todd Brown; and the original music was by Ryan McMasters. The cast was as follows:

NATALIA Robin Abramson
HELEN CASEY Laurie Klatscher
REED CASEY John Shepard
AMBIMBOLA..... Monteze Freeland
ROZIE..... Ruth Gamble
DAN/DON/DAVE Nick Lehane

THE ELECTRIC BABY was subsequently presented at Two River Theater Company (Robert M. Rechnitz, Executive Producer; John Dias, Artistic Director) in Red Bank, New Jersey, opening on April 26, 2013. It was directed by May Adrales; the set design was by Mimi Lien; the lighting design was by Gina Scherr; and the original music and sound design were by Nathan A. Roberts and Charles Coes. The cast was as follows:

NATALIAAntoinette LaVecchia
HELEN CASEY Lizbeth Mackay
REED CASEY Steven Skybell
AMBIMBOLA..... Oberon K.A. Adjepong
ROZIE.....Lucy DeVito
DAN/DON/DAVE Nick Lehane

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the following people and organizations who were instrumental in the development of this play: Daniella Topol; Kate Navin; Michael McWatters; Mark Plesent and the Working Theater; Suzanne Maloney, Jessica Lefkow, and Theater of the First Amendment; Katherine Kovner, Stephanie Ybarra, and Playwrights Realm; Paul Meshejian, Michelle Volanksy, Carrie Chapter, and PlayPenn; Karla Boos and Quantum Theatre; John Dias, May Adrales, Stephanie Coen, and Two River Theater Company; as well as all the actors and designers who have been so generous with their talent.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The use of a slash (/) in the middle of a line of dialogue indicates that the next line of dialogue begins at that moment, creating verbal overlap. The use of a dash (—) at the end of the line means the next line of dialogue comes immediately after, creating a near overlap. Following all the punctuation will help decipher the intended rhythms for the scenes and characters.

This is a play about the power of story, and therefore the key to presenting the play is always to find the simplest solution — be it a single theatrical gesture in the design or making the simplest acting choice. Trust the simplicity of good storytelling.

None of the characters are cartoonish, nor are they fraught around the baby. Dan/Don/Dave is most effectively played with simple changes rather than big shifts and accents. Only “ghost Dan” (or “evil Dan”) makes a dramatic shift, because that’s how he looms in Rozie’s mind.

The play’s female characters are complicated and unsentimental. Natalia has an Eastern European matter-of-fact quality with strangers, and towards her baby she maintains strength and composure despite the circumstances. The actresses playing Helen and Rozie should not worry that the audience won’t like them if they are strident or angry. That’s the point. Their journey in the play is to *slowly* climb out from a place of anger and despair.

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

NATALIA — 30s. Romanian. Mother to the electric baby.

HELEN CASEY — 50s–60s. Married to Reed.

REED CASEY — 50s–60s. Helen's husband.

AMBIMBOLA — 30s–40s. Nigerian. A cab driver,
among other things.

ROZIE — 22. A waitress and part-time escort. Off-beat,
damaged.

DAN/DON/DAVE — 20s–30s. Dan stutters. He's the
nice guy a girl like Rozie won't let herself date. Don
is a nurse. Dave is a waiter.

PLACE

Pittsburgh, PA.

TIME

Present day.

THE ELECTRIC BABY

NATALIA SITS BY THE BASSINET

A soothing lullaby mixes with the rhythmic hiss of an oxygen concentrator.

Natalia sits knitting/crocheting in a chair next to a bassinet, from which a warm, bright light emanates.

The bassinet is covered in Natalia's knitting. Out of the bassinet erupt several wires and tubes, also covered in knitting, that run across the floor and disappear.

Natalia looks up, notices the audience, and smiles.

Suddenly, she spits in her hand. She then wipes the opposite index finger on the bottom of her shoe and mixes the dirt with the spit in her hand. She wipes the mixture on the baby's forehead, bends down, and mutters in Romanian to the child.

NATALIA. *Așa cum călcâiul dela pantoful meu nu se deoache, așa să nu se deoache copilul meu.*

(Thick Romanian accent.) Try not to talk too much. Is not good to wake the baby. Needs to sleep. Babies beautiful when they sleep, no? Trick is not to mess with that. *(She crochets for a while.)* So, which one of you is going to drive everybody crazy with the coughing, eh? Seriously. You? Maybe? Maybe a little, yeah? Tonight, go home, feel sorry for bothering all the nice peoples who sits by you. Then, take pair of white socks, dips them in whiskey, put hands inside. *(She crosses her arms over her chest.)* Sleeps like this. You wake up, no cough. Next time do this before you go to theater. *(She rocks the*

bassinets and, in Romanian, tells the baby about dipping socks in whiskey to cure a cough.) Dacă ai o tuse, înmoi o pereche de șosete albe în whiskey, apoi le pui pe mâini și dormi cu ele. Când te trezești, nu vei mai tusi.

Shh ... Anybody little bit stinky? (*To baby.*) Not you, stinky. I hope. (*Sniffs bassinets.*) All good. Someone feeling stinky? Don't have to raise hand. We know which one you are, trust me. Stinky person, this one for you, as they say, free-of-charge. Take two potatoes, put in fridge. Let gets cold, then peel potatoes and put one under each arm like so. Rotate couple of times until room temperature. Do two times a day for something like ... four days. Armpits will turn black, don't freak out. Is temporary. Is toxins, you know, coming out. When toxins gone, smell gone too. Seriously, don't use the antiperspirant, has aluminum, cause cancer. Try potato instead. (*Natalia tells the baby in Romanian not to use antiperspirant because it causes cancer.*) Scumpo, nu folosi antiperspirant niciodată, faci cancer.

Oh, look who's waking up. (*To baby.*) You want to say the next one? No? Okay. What? Which one? Ah yes, this is good one. (*To audience.*) Tell this one, he says — if you have headache, put the banana peel on the forehead. Maybe fifteen, maybe twenty minutes, headache gone. Seriously. If nothing else, when peoples laugh at you for having banana peel on the forehead, you forgets you have headache. I joke, I joke. But banana peel is good remedy. Now, please, the ring tone you have chosen for your small electronic device is maybe only cute and charming for you. Is probably good idea to turn it off now. Also, wait until the end to have to pee, otherwise bothers everybody when you get up. Yeah? Next time maybe skip giant coffee with the whip creams. For coffee, one should drink only one cup, no sugar. Then everybody not so fat, not so angry, everybody sleeping, America is happy, end-of-story. Why I tell you these things? I don't bloody know. You have child, you remember things. You want to tell them whats you know. You think, maybe it will make life easier for them. They won't listen, but they will know. I don't bloody know. Maybe I will stop talking and listen. (*To baby.*) You would like that, eh?

THE ELECTRIC BABY

by Stefanie Zadravec

3M, 3W

When Helen causes a car accident that kills a young man, a group of fractured souls cross paths and connect around a mysterious dying baby who glows like the moon. Folk tales and folklore weave throughout this magical story of sad endings, strange beginnings, and the unlikely people that get you from one place to the next.

“The imperceptible magic that pervades human existence and the power of myth to assuage sorrow are invoked by Stefanie Zadravec as she entwines the lives of strangers in THE ELECTRIC BABY, a touching new drama.” —**The New York Times**

“This surreal show functions like an adult pop-up book ... [a] mix of fun and surprise.”
—**The Week Magazine**

“As dazzling as the dialogue is dreamful.” —**Pittsburgh City Paper**

“Sometimes even a critic is charmed into analytical silence. No, make that enthralled and also warned. Not that I can’t think of ways to explain THE ELECTRIC BABY, but even if I were right, it might dull both its delicacy and its strength.”
—**Pittsburgh Post-Gazette**

“While it delves deeply into loss, Zadravec’s rich, lyrical play is far from a dirge. Inflected with humor and folklore, it expounds on the stories, memories and relationships that become a refuge when staying up nights with a sick baby or lying in a hospital bed.”
—**The Star-Ledger (NJ)**

“Dazzling and original.” —**TalkinBroadway.com**

Also by Stefanie Zadravec
HONEY BROWN EYES

ISBN 978-0-8222-3011-3



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