



SOME BRIGHTER DISTANCE

BY KEITH REDDIN



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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SOME BRIGHTER DISTANCE was first produced by City Theater (Tracy Brigden, Artistic Director; James McNeel, Managing Director) on January 23, 2016. It was directed by Tracy Bridgen, the set design was by Gianni Downs, the costume design was by Robert C. T. Steele, the lighting design was by Andrew David Ostrowski, the sound design was by Joe Pino, the projection design was by Jordan Harrison, the dramaturg was Clare Drobot, and the production stage manager was Patti Kelly. The cast was as follows:

Arthur Rudolph	Jonathon Tindle
Robert Davis.....	LeRoy McClain
Major Turner.....	Matthew Stocke
Marta Rudolph.....	Elizabeth Rich
Werner Von Braun	David Whalen

City Theater's world premiere production was supported by the Edgerton Foundation's New Play Award and by the National Endowment for the Arts.

SOME BRIGHTER DISTANCE was commissioned and developed by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Science and Technology Project.

The play was further developed with readings at the Ensemble Studio Theater, South Coast Repertory, and City Theater.

CHARACTERS

ARTHUR RUDOLPH

MARTA RUDOLPH

ROBERT DAVIS

MAJOR TURNER

WERNHER VON BRAUN

TIME

The play takes place during the years 1934 to 1984.

SOME BRIGHTER DISTANCE

In the darkness, the sound of a projector, the light flickering into the audience. The film ends. Lights snap up to: hotel conference room at the Hyatt Regency, Santa Barbara, California. Arthur and Davis.

DAVIS. Thank you for coming down here today Mr. Rudolph. My name is Robert Davis. I'm from the Department of Justice.

ARTHUR. I got a message. To meet here?

DAVIS. Would you like a sandwich? I ordered some food.

ARTHUR. No thank you.

DAVIS. How was your drive?

ARTHUR. My drive?

DAVIS. Any problems with the traffic on the 405?

ARTHUR. Excuse me, I'd like to know why I'm here.

DAVIS. Mr. Rudolph, certain new information has come to our attention and we thought it prudent to discuss the situation with you as soon as possible.

ARTHUR. I don't understand.

DAVIS. Concerning a new investigation.

ARTHUR. Is this about my work? Because I've been retired for a number of years. I am no longer actively involved with the NASA or any program that requires a security status.

Beat.

DAVIS. Mr. Rudolph why don't you sit down. The Justice Department now has reason to believe that you entered this country not as a genuine refugee, but that in fact you were smuggled illegally in 1946. They also believe that the file on your wartime activities was substantially altered.

ARTHUR. I think I should contact my attorney.

DAVIS. We'd like to assure you that you will be able to maintain your pension. It's a very substantial pension, as I understand, given in recognition of your services to the government.

ARTHUR. If I what?

DAVIS. I'm sorry?

ARTHUR. There's something you want me to do, isn't there?

DAVIS. As a matter of fact there is something.

ARTHUR. Yes?

DAVIS. In order to continue to receive your pension I'm afraid we would require you to sign an agreement renouncing your American citizenship.

ARTHUR. My citizenship.

Beat.

DAVIS. Mr. Rudolph this new information has put us in a very awkward situation. Unless you comply, there will have to be criminal charges brought against you. You will have to stand trial unless you acknowledge your war crimes. Are you sure you don't want any coffee?

ARTHUR. I was thoroughly investigated forty years ago, months of questions at the end of the war, my record, everything was... was verified a long time ago.

DAVIS. Mr. Rudolph, I think it would be in your best interest if you would respond to the information I've prepared.

ARTHUR. Are you recording this?

DAVIS. What?

ARTHUR. I'm asking if you are recording this conversation.

DAVIS. I'm not recording anything.

ARTHUR. I'm not answering any more questions.

DAVIS. I'm just trying to establish the truth.

ARTHUR. Whose truth?

DAVIS. I didn't think the truth was subjective.

ARTHUR. You call me down here. To entrap me. I see this all the time on the news. How people are trapped into saying things.

DAVIS. That's not what I'm trying to do Mr. Rudolph.

ARTHUR. What do you want?

DAVIS. To try and resolve this situation.

ARTHUR. I'm not going to—

DAVIS. Please sit down sir.

ARTHUR. What?

DAVIS. I'm advising you to sit down and listen to what the government is offering you. It's in your best interest to consider this agreement, Mr. Rudolph. You need to understand the gravity of your situation. It is very serious and your walking away today would not help you.

Beat.

ARTHUR. Could you...could you turn down the air conditioner?

DAVIS. The air conditioner isn't on, Mr. Rudolph.

ARTHUR. I'm cold.

DAVIS. You're cold?

ARTHUR. Yes. Terribly cold.

DAVIS. I'm sorry—

ARTHUR. I have been without heat or adequate food. I was promised that I would be transferred.

DAVIS. Mr. Rudolph are you all right?

ARTHUR. I have already answered your questions!

DAVIS. Can I get you some water?

Turner, in uniform, appears.

ARTHUR. I've talked to so many people.

DAVIS. When was this?

ARTHUR. This has been going on and on, for weeks. I was assured, I was given guarantees by your government, that I would be able to continue my work.

Lights shift. Projection: a barracks in Germany, 1945.

TURNER. You understand it is a very complicated process.

Beat.

Doctor Rudolph, I came here to Germany to help you. I'm sorry there's no heat in this facility, we have to make do.

Beat.

I have to tell you Doctor Rudolph we've established that you German scientists were at least a decade ahead of our guys in the States.

Davis exits.

We were all very impressed.

ARTHUR. Thank you.

TURNER. My file says you were deputy production manager at the research facility at Nordhausen, is that correct?

ARTHUR. I began two years ago. In the spring of 1943.

TURNER. Very good.

TURNER. And you were involved in the development of the V-1 rocket?

ARTHUR. Yes. Production started in November of that year.

TURNER. And then the V-2?

ARTHUR. Around June of 1944. We had learned that the British didn't have enough wind tunnels or the ability to produce a shape that would allow the jets to power their airframe at the faster speeds necessary. But we did, and we came up with the solution. A swept wing.

TURNER. I see.

ARTHUR. Without a swept wing on the rocket you couldn't attain any speed above 770 kilometers per hour.

TURNER. How many miles is that?

ARTHUR. 478,456. With the new design we put into production, rockets were traveling at over—

Beat.

—six hundred miles an hour.

TURNER. No kidding.

ARTHUR. From there we created the prototypes of the V-2.

TURNER. So with those rockets your program got the highest priority. Forcing you to rapidly increase the workforce, right?

ARTHUR. That's correct Major Turner.

TURNER. How many other people would you say were working there? Besides the scientists?

ARTHUR. By the end of the war, it was perhaps about thirty, forty thousand.

TURNER. Recruited from?

ARTHUR. From the available labor force.

TURNER. And to your knowledge where did that labor force come from, Doctor Rudolph?

Davis enters.

ARTHUR. I was only involved with research.

TURNER. Very good.

Making a note in his file.

I'll write, "No involvement in labor force decisions."

DAVIS. Mr. Rudolph, we have reports that the laborers had to dig the tunnels with their hands. Without drills or excavators.

ARTHUR. I don't know how they worked.

DAVIS. You're saying you were never on site?

ARTHUR. I'm saying I had no involvement with the laborers.

Turner exits, lights shift. The Hyatt, 1984.

DAVIS. But you must have been aware there were almost no sanitation or medical facilities available to these workers.

ARTHUR. Again, my responsibilities were only with research and the development of the rockets.

DAVIS. Have you ever heard of an Eli Rosenbaum?

ARTHUR. Rosenbaum. I don't know this person, no.

DAVIS. He's a lawyer with the Justice Department.

ARTHUR. I've never heard of him.

DAVIS. My understanding is while he was a law student at Harvard he came across a book.

ARTHUR. What book?

DAVIS. The memoirs of a survivor. From the camp at Nordhausen. This book was out of print, and Mr. Rosenbaum found it in some secondhand bookshop in Cambridge.

ARTHUR. How industrious of him.

DAVIS. In this book the author named you as someone who had committed terrible crimes. Mr. Rosenbaum graduated from Harvard and was eventually was hired by the OSI.

ARTHUR. Office of Special Investigations.

DAVIS. A branch of the Justice Department set up to investigate possible war criminals living in this country.

ARTHUR. I know all about that.

DAVIS. It seems Mr. Rosenbaum has demanded you should be prosecuted. He compiled a very extensive file of evidence he uncovered.

ARTHUR. I see.

DAVIS. He threatened to go to the press with this new material.

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by Keith Reddin

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During the Cold War, German rocket scientist Arthur Rudolph was instrumental in helping America win the Space Race. Rudolph—who directed the German lab that produced the V-2 rocket, and who was implicated in working thousands of slave laborers to death—was the only scientist to face prosecution for war crimes. When he is forced to confront his Nazi history, Rudolph and his wife are cast out of the country he has diligently served for nearly forty years. This time-bending play explores the untold (and true) story of “Operation Paperclip” and questions the cost of burying the past in pursuit of the future.

“SOME BRIGHTER DISTANCE is a theatrical jewel whose facets reflect human nature, science, love, and recent history. ...Reddin’s script...sparkles...as efficient as a space station kitchen—compact, practical, equipped with what’s needed for the trip. ...an exemplary experience of theater...” —PittsburghInTheRound.com

“...fascinating...[a] knotty, weighty work...” —BroadwayWorld.com

“Moral ambiguity and pragmatism run through this 90-minute, intermissionless drama...the play raises and explores a number of thought-provoking moral issues...” —Pittsburgh Tribune-Review

“Call SOME BRIGHTER DISTANCE a docudrama if you choose, but put the emphasis on drama. In making the past vivid, it explores the intersection of private and civic responsibility, showing us our own national face, disquieted by the reflection.” —Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

“Reddin shows his mastery of craft in the structuring of the play—time shifts around his central character as the story flashes back and forth between 1984 and a series of milestones in Arthur Rudolph’s personal and professional life. The effect is the theatrical equivalent of cinematic cuts, and it keeps the action fluid...the play’s story is absorbing...” —The Pittsburgh Tatler

Also by Keith Reddin

ALMOST BLUE

FRAME 312

LIFE DURING WARTIME

and others

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