



THE ORPHANS' HOME CYCLE

PART TWO: THE STORY
OF A MARRIAGE

BY HORTON FOOTE



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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The World Premiere Production of THE ORPHANS' HOME CYCLE
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Michael Wilson, Artistic Director; Michael Stotts, Managing Director,
and Signature Theatre Company,
James Houghton, Founding Artistic Director; Erika Mallin, Executive Director.

The three-part version of THE ORPHANS' HOME CYCLE
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Original Music and Sound Design by John Gromada

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Horton Foote began writing *The Orphans' Home Cycle* following the deaths of his parents, Albert Horton and Hallie Brooks Foote who passed away within a year of one another in the early 1970s. Horton loved his mother and father very much: their sixty-year devotion to one another had provided him a nurturing childhood, the example of a happy marriage, and the power of making a family with someone you love.

Yet his parents had both endured difficult lives, particularly Horton's father, who had been brutally separated from his own parents and made an orphan when he was only twelve.

Horton began to conceive a cycle of plays that would trace his father's harrowing but miraculous journey from his wandering childhood through his courtship and marriage to Elizabeth Vaughn (based on Horton's mother) and their struggle to make a family during the turbulent years of World War I and the influenza epidemic of 1918. The cycle would ultimately interweave the stories of three generations of three families in post-Reconstruction Texas, from 1904 to 1928. In the final play, its author would appear in the guise of the ten-year-old Horace Robedaux, Jr.

Horton wrote the plays out of order in New Hampshire and began developing them quietly with his long-time collaborator, Herbert Berghof, at HB Studios in the West Village. On the heels of his Oscar-winning films, *Tender Mercies* and *The Trip to Bountiful*, Horton with his wife, Lillian, produced three of the plays as films in the mid-1980s: *Courtship*, *Valentine's Day* and *1918*. They all starred Horton's daughter, Hallie, who played Elizabeth, the character based on her grandmother. At the same time, Hallie played opposite Matthew Broderick's Horace in a critically acclaimed Off-Broadway production of *The Widow Claire*.

When I first met Horton in 1987, four of the cycle plays had yet to be produced on stage or screen. I recall a visit with Horton and Lillian one night after supper in the parlor of their Wharton, Texas home in the summer of 1991. They were actively figuring out how to produce the rest of the cycle on film, as they had virtually given

up on ever seeing all the plays produced either singly or much less all together on stage. I remember thinking to myself how could such a singular achievement — a cycle of nine plays (one that had been attempted but not realized by Eugene O’Neill) — created by arguably our country’s greatest storyteller be so ignored by our own American theater?

Years passed. In 1997, Horton asked me to direct the premiere of the cycle’s final play, *The Death of Papa*, once again starring Hallie and Matthew. A year later, I was appointed Artistic Director at Hartford Stage and invited Horton to make an artistic home there. For the next eleven years, we enjoyed many happy collaborations together, in Hartford, at the Alley in Houston, the Guthrie, and at Lincoln Center Theater and Primary Stages in New York.

But there remained the holy grail of Horton’s *Orphans’ Home Cycle*. Through the years, I had been fortunate to see a number of epic productions, spanning nine or more hours in the theater, including Peter Brook’s *The Mahabharata*, Ariane Mnouchkine’s *Les Atrides*, Peter Hall’s *Tantalus*, and Jack O’Brien’s staging of Tom Stoppard’s *Coast of Utopia*. I asked Horton to consider adapting his nine full-length play cycle into three three-hour evenings of theater that could be produced in repertory and seen over three nights, two nights, or all in one day.

For a long time, he was reluctant. Then in June 2008, while he, Hallie and I were working together in the back porch study of his boyhood home in Wharton, he said to me, “Buddy, I have found my way through. And that is, to simply follow Horace. It is through his story we will experience the lives of all the other characters as well.”

And that’s what he did. He began adapting, sometimes rewriting but mostly carefully cutting his original plays to make Horace even more the central protagonist of his cycle. André Bishop hosted the first reading of Parts 1 and 2 in January 2009, the day after we closed *Dividing the Estate* on Broadway. Horton passed away quietly in Hartford on March 4. Twelve days later, Jim Houghton and I hosted the first reading of Part 3 at Hartford Stage. Thanks to an extraordinary gift from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and

several generous angels, Horton's three-part, nine-hour version of *The Orphans' Home Cycle* began rehearsals at Hartford Stage in June of that year, with all three parts running in repertory, including all-day marathon performances, as the Signature Theatre's 2009–2010 season. Posthumously, Horton received his first New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for his cycle in 2010.

So here the plays are, with all of Horton's immense, unflinching humanity. You can produce one part at a time, one part each season, or ambitiously do them all together. The settings can be simple, evocative. Horton marveled at the imagination of directors and designers, and was not, as some of his critics suggest, a stubborn realist or a merely miniature portrait artist, as these plays prove. He loved the theatre and was very curious about the use of dance, music and poetry to tell his stories. In fact, the title of his cycle comes from a line from Marianne Moore's poem "In Distrust of Merits" — "The world's an orphans' home." By creating a cycle that captured his own experience of being orphaned by the death of his parents, Horton made it possible for audiences and readers to better understand their own inevitable passage to becoming an orphan.

Enjoy your journey through his dark yet somehow very hopeful world of American life at the beginning of the twentieth century. The full-length versions of his cycle plays — as well as many of his other masterpieces — are also available through Dramatists Play Service. His writing uniquely captures what it means to be human and our collective American experience.

Michael Wilson
March 14, 2013

THE ORPHANS' HOME CYCLE, PART TWO: THE STORY OF A MARRIAGE premiered Off-Broadway at Signature Theatre Company, produced in collaboration with Hartford Stage, on December 17, 2009. It was directed by Michael Wilson; the set design was by Jeff Cowie and David Barber; the costume design was by David C. Woolard; the lighting design was by Rui Rita; the original music and sound design were by John Gromada; the projection design was by Jan Hartley; the choreographer was Peter Pucci the wig and hair design were by Mark Adam Rampmeyer; and the fight director was Mark Olsen. The cast was as follows:

ACT I: THE WIDOW CLAIRE

FELIX BARCLAY Bryce Pinkham
ED CORDAY Justin Fuller
ARCHIE GORDON Stephen Plunkett
HORACE ROBEDAUX Bill Heck
CLAIRE RATLIFF Virginia Kull
MOLLY Emily Robinson
BUDDY Dylan Riley Snyder
VAL STANTON Lucas Caleb Rooney
ROGER CULPEPPER Devon Abner

ACT II: COURTSHIP

ELIZABETH VAUGHN Maggie Lacey
ELIZA Pat Bowie
SARAH VAUGHN Pamela Payton-Wright
LUCY (VAUGHN) STEWART Annalee Jefferies
MRS. VAUGHN Hallie Foote
LAURA VAUGHN Jenny Dare Paulin
MR. VAUGHN James DeMarse
HORACE ROBEDAUX Bill Heck
STEVE TYLER Stephen Plunkett

ACT III: VALENTINE'S DAY

ELIZABETH ROBEDEAUX Maggie Lacey
BESSIE STILLMAN Virginia Kull
GEORGE TYLER Lucas Caleb Rooney
BOBBY PATE Devon Abner
RUTH AMOS Pamela Payton-Wright
HORACE ROBEDAUX Bill Heck
STEVE TYLER Stephen Plunkett
MRS. VAUGHN Hallie Foote
BROTHER VAUGHN Bryce Pinkham
MR. VAUGHN James DeMarse
DR. GREENE Justin Fuller

CHARACTERS

FELIX BARCLAY

ED CORDAY

ARCHIE GORDON

HORACE ROBEDAUX

CLAIRE RATLIFF

MOLLY

BUDDY

VAL STANTON

ROGER CULPEPPER

ELIZABETH (ROBEDAUX) VAUGHN

ELIZA

SARAH VAUGHN

LUCY (VAUGHN) STEWART

MRS. VAUGHN

LAURA VAUGHN

MR. VAUGHN

STEVE TYLER

BESSIE STILLMAN

GEORGE TYLER

BOBBY PATE

RUTH AMOS

BROTHER VAUGHN

DR. GREENE

PLACE and TIME

Act One

Harrison, Texas. 1912

Act Two

The Vaughn house, Harrison, Texas. 1916.

Act Three

Harrison, Texas. Christmas Eve, 1917

THE ORPHANS' HOME CYCLE

PART TWO: THE STORY OF A MARRIAGE

ACT ONE

“The Widow Claire”

Scene 1

The lights are brought up on the downstage left area. We see a section of a furnished room with a cot far right. Three young men, Archie, Felix, and Ed, are at a table playing poker. They are in their shirtsleeves. Horace Robedaux, 22, tying his tie, watches the poker game.

FELIX. When I get some money ahead, I'm going into Houston and get into some big games. *(Pause.)* They have some big games in Houston. *(Pause.)* They have a game going day and night at the Clarke Hotel. They say you don't need to know nobody. You just go into the lobby of the Clarke and ask the desk clerk the room where the game is being held and he tells you, and you go up to the room —

ED. *(Interrupting.)* Shut up and play cards. *(There is silence. Horace finishes tying his tie. He whistles “Waltz Me Around Again, Willie.”)* Shut up, Horace. *(Horace stops whistling and puts his coat on.)*

FELIX. Archie is the ladies' man to beat all ladies' men. When a

girl calls up and he answers the phone, they ask him what he's doing and he says, "Thinking of you."

ED. Will you shut up, Felix? Get out of the game if you're going to talk. (*Horace gets a clothes brush and brushes his coat. Ed throws his cards down. Archie begins to take money from the pot. Ed walks away from the table.*) I'm through. I'm cleaned out.

FELIX. Don't you have any more money?

ED. No.

FELIX. Come on and play, Horace.

HORACE. I can't. I have a date.

ED. Loan me a little money, Horace.

HORACE. I can't.

ED. Come on, be a friend.

HORACE. I can't. I leave for business school tomorrow. I need all my money for that. (*Ed gets up and goes to the door.*)

FELIX. Where are you going?

ED. Just going to wander downtown. See what's up. (*He goes.*)

ARCHIE. You better get in the game, Horace — you could double your money.

HORACE. No, thank you. I tried that before.

FELIX. Horace has worse luck at poker than his Uncle Albert.

ARCHIE. Let's shoot some craps. Maybe you'll have some luck with that.

HORACE. Not me. (*Horace looks at his watch.*)

ARCHIE. Who is your date with?

HORACE. Claire.

ARCHIE. The widow Claire?

HORACE. Yes.

FELIX. I had a date with her a month ago, but her kids wouldn't leave us alone. I had to give them both a nickel to shut them up.

ARCHIE. How many dates have you had with her, Horace?

HORACE. Two.

ARCHIE. They tell me widows can be dangerous. You be careful over there, Horace.

HORACE. I can take care of myself.

FELIX. She's seeing a lot of other fellows, too, you know.

ARCHIE. She's seeing Val and she's seeing —

HORACE. (*Interrupting.*) I know who all she's seeing. She makes no secret about it. (*Horace leaves.*)

FELIX. What was the name of that last song Horace was singing?

THE ORPHANS' HOME CYCLE, PART TWO: THE STORY OF A MARRIAGE

by Horton Foote

14M, 8W (doubling)

Act One: "The Widow Claire." On the night before he leaves Harrison for business school in Houston, Horace calls on the widow Claire Ratliff. Over the course of the evening he becomes further entangled in the lives of Claire and her young children as she makes a decision that will decide their futures.

Act Two: "Courtship." Elizabeth Vaughn has been seeing Horace Robedaux against the wishes of her parents and now must make a choice between Horace and her family.

Act Three: "Valentine's Day." While Horace and Elizabeth plan for their future and reconcile with her family, the once-stable lives of the previous generation seem to be falling apart.

"Horton Foote's epic nine-play cycle about early-twentieth-century life in the small fictional town of Harrison, Texas, continues on its winning way ... utterly engaging and deeply compelling work."

—BackStage

"The second part of Horton Foote's immensely satisfying ORPHANS' HOME CYCLE is fraught and full of darkness ... Stakes remain high, the ending is far off and our hero realizes that a long, hard road lies ahead. In Foote's nine-play, three-part epic about the youth and adulthood of Horace Robedaux; (based on his father's life), we see a man with a painful past trying to build a future."

—The New Yorker

"Rarely has everyday life been so modestly inspiring as it is in Foote's hands."

—The New York Post

"Don't be deceived by the uneventfulness of THE STORY OF A MARRIAGE, a play about nothing that turns out to have been about everything: love, loss, death, hope."

—The Wall Street Journal

Also by Horton Foote

THE ORPHANS' HOME CYCLE, PART ONE:

THE STORY OF A CHILDHOOD

THE ORPHANS' HOME CYCLE, PART THREE:

THE STORY OF A FAMILY

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