



AFTER THE REVOLUTION

BY **AMY HERZOG**



DRAMATISTS
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INC.



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The World Premiere of AFTER THE REVOLUTION
was commissioned, developed, and produced on July 21, 2010
by the Williamstown Theatre Festival (Nicholas Martin, Artistic Director).

Playwrights Horizons, Inc. produced the New York City premiere of
AFTER THE REVOLUTION Off-Broadway in 2010.

For J.J.J.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My profound thanks to Amanda Charlton, Justin Waldman, and Nicholas Martin, who provided the impetus for writing this play and the support to bring it to the stage; Tamara Fisch, my collaborator and this play's midwife; the wonderful non-equity company at Williamstown; the Playwrights Realm for additional developmental support; the incredible cast, brilliant in two states; Adam Greenfield, Tim Sanford and Playwrights Horizons for taking the chance and Carol Fishman for making the numbers work; Carolyn Cantor for her beautiful productions; Richard Nelson and John Guare for their guidance; Val Day, Liz De Cesare, and WME; Sam Gold; Leepee Tuft; the Lessin-Josephs, Schiffman-Josephs, Joseph McGlaves, and Herzogs.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The multiple locations need not be fully realized; in our production, one set served for the entire play and the audience had no trouble following the action. Other solutions are also possible. The important thing is to keep transitions short and the play moving.

Ideally, Emma does not leave the stage once she enters except during Act One, Scene 2 and Act Two, Scene 1 where indicated.

AFTER THE REVOLUTION was commissioned and first presented by the Williamstown Theatre Festival.

AFTER THE REVOLUTION was subsequently presented at the Playwrights Horizons Peter Jay Sharp Theatre in New York City, opening on November 9, 2010. It was directed by Carolyn Cantor; the set design was by Clint Ramos; the costume design was by Kaye Voyce; the lighting design was by Ben Stanton; the digital music and sound design were by Fitz Patton; and the production stage manager was Hannah Cohen. The cast was as follows:

BEN	Peter Friedman
MEL	Mare Winningham
LEO	Mark Blum
VERA	Lois Smith
EMMA	Katharine Powell
MIGUEL	Elliot Villar
MORTY	David Margulies
JESS	Meredith Holzman

CHARACTERS

BEN JOSEPH Forty-nine, Joe's middle child.

MEL Late forties, female, Ben's partner.

LEO JOSEPH Fifty-two, Joe's oldest.

VERA Eighty-two, Joe's second wife.

EMMA JOSEPH Twenty-six, Ben's younger daughter.
An activist.

MIGUEL Twenty-six, Emma's boyfriend.

MORTY Seventy-six, a donor to Emma's fund.

JESS Twenty-eight, Ben's older daughter.

TIME

May and June of 1999;
a year and a half after Joe Joseph's death.

PLACE

New York and Boston.

Note: Slashes (/) indicate overlapping dialogue.

AFTER THE REVOLUTION

ACT ONE

Scene 1

June 1999.

Vera's apartment on West 10th Street, early evening. The mood is ebullient, though everyone is tired.

BEN. So it's this program, kids from the projects in Roxbury are bused out to our school, there's grant money in it for us and it allows our superintendent to pat herself on the back but she doesn't actually take / any responsibility for —

MEL. It's a scandal, it's / really —

BEN. So these kids get a bus ride, but they don't get help buying textbooks, or paper, they don't get computers — they're supposed to use our computer lab but then they'd miss their / bus home —

MEL. And then they're penalized / for —

BEN. And then it's a big surprise they aren't passing their classes. Our principal calls a meeting, all these kids and their parents, half the parents don't show, / big surprise —

LEO. Right.

MEL. They're working three jobs, they're gonna come out to the suburbs because their kid's not passing math? I mean this is / their biggest —

LEO. God.

BEN. So the principal is standing up there / *lecturing* —

MEL. This guy is — he should *not* be in education, he has this / punitive —

BEN. The sense is *we are giving your children this opportunity and they are / squandering it* —

MEL. Which is —

BEN. And you can see these parents, the ones who have missed their shift at — Rite Aid or — to be here, they're just glazing over, I mean, they're so / alienated —

MEL. So Ben stands up, / I wish I was there.

BEN. I had been kind of hiding in the — so I stand up and I say my name is Ben Joseph, and I teach history and social justice here, and I'm a Marxist, and I don't think the problem is your children, I think the problem is our society the product of which is this school. I'm sorry that we have failed you, and I want to work with you and your children for change.

MEL. I *wish* I had been there.

LEO. And the principal?

MEL. Forget / it.

BEN. Furious. Goes white. Tries to bring the conversation back to personal responsibility.

MEL. But in the meantime Ben has them working on a list of / — what was it?

BEN. I said this meeting shouldn't be about us telling you what *we* need, you should be doing the talking, what do you need?

LEO. Good for you, bro.

MEL. What Benji's not telling you is that he told these kids at the beginning of the year that if they wanted extra help after school and they missed their bus, he would *drive them home*, you know, forty-five minutes to — and a lot of them took him up on it. (*Brief pause.*)

BEN. And what about you, how were your classes this semester?

LEO. My — I was on sabbatical, I didn't tell you that?

BEN. But you didn't travel...?

LEO. Nah, just stayed home to work on the book.

BEN. The same one?

MEL. Don't say it like that.

BEN. Like what? I said / it neutrally.

MEL. It takes a long time to write a book. It takes me a long time to *read* a book.

LEO. The answer is yes. Same one. (*Brief pause.*) Sammy's been

having a big season, you know, with the baseball, so it's been good to be around for that, especially since Beth is working again.

BEN. Well. Standing offer. Trade for a day. Anytime you want to come to Brookline and teach six periods a day I'll swing over to Tufts and do one of your sociology lectures. *(Vera has entered. She is sprightly at eighty-two, but fragile and maybe a little off-balance.)*

VERA. Has the graduate arrived?

MEL. Not yet.

VERA. What do you think is taking her so long?

LEO. Well, the subways were a mess getting / downtown.

BEN. Nah, if I know my daughter, she's on the phone with a journalist, or a / senator —

MEL. She really can't stop working, I think it's a / problem.

BEN. It's not a problem for all the people she's helping, I'll tell you that.

VERA. Well, will somebody come taste my eggplant?

LEO. Your eggplant is perfect, take a load off, join us.

VERA. Well —

MEL. Sit, Vera!

LEO. Here, take my chair.

VERA. I guess I'll allow that.

BEN. We were telling / Leo —

VERA. Louder.

BEN. I was telling my big bro about that meeting, with the parents / of the —

VERA. Oh, about the black kids. *(To Leo.)* Isn't that outrageous, what passes for a, whaddayacallit. / A social program.

BEN. They're actually — they're about seventy percent African-American, / thirty percent Latino.

VERA. What?

BEN. They're not all black! *(Brief pause.)*

VERA. Who? *(Ben laughs and shakes his head.)*

LEO. *(To Vera.)* Doesn't he look more and more like Dad?

MEL. *(To Leo.)* Oh god, I know, it's uncanny.

BEN. What?

MEL/LEO/VERA. You look like Joe/Dad. *(Leo says "Dad" where Mel and Vera say "Joe.")*

VERA. And you sound like him. And your politics are like his. And I think all in all it's pretty wonderful, but that's just what I think. *(Brief pause.)*

BEN. I was wishing he could've seen Emma up there today.

VERA. Well, he couldn't, and that's that. But then again he also can't see how all the rest of the grandchildren aren't in the political scene at all. So maybe it's for the best.

LEO. (*An attempt at light-heartedness.*) Not talking about *my* kids, are you, Vera?

VERA. Yes, I am, I'm talking about Jake, and Katie, and, uh ...

LEO. Sammy.

VERA. Right, and all of Janie's kids. They're all very nice people and so on and so forth, but they're not political. It's not a criticism, it's just an observation.

LEO. You're my stepmother and I love you but I think it was / a criticism.

MEL. I've always hated that word "stepmother." I've heard in French what they say is "beautiful mother," now isn't that nicer?

VERA. What?

BEN. She doesn't like the word "stepmother."

MEL. It doesn't do you justice, Vera.

VERA. Oh. Well. You either. (*Emma enters.*)

EMMA. Sorry I'm / late. (*Everyone stands, bursts into applause, cries of Hey! Brava! etc.*) Stop it. Stop stop stop. I love you all, now shut up.

BEN. Get over here, kid. (*She goes to her dad, who bear-hugs her.*)

EMMA. Was it okay?

BEN. Was it okay? Was it *okay*?

EMMA. I couldn't hear myself at all. (*She hugs Mel.*)

MEL. God, I'm proud of you. You know what? Proud is not the right word because that sounds like I did something. I am *glad* for you.

EMMA. Thanks, Mel.

VERA. Emma?

EMMA. I'm really sorry, I was on my way here two hours ago, but Mumia's lawyer called, there's a development in the case and — anyway, sorry.

MEL. (*To Vera.*) Can you believe the way she just rattles off his first name like that? He's a / celebrity to me.

VERA. Who?

MEL. Mumia Abu-Jamal.

BEN. What's the development?

EMMA. And it should have been a five-minute conversation but it never is with Leonard. Hi Uncle Leo, thanks for making it.

LEO. I wouldn't miss it. G & T?

EMMA. No, I feel like I've been drinking for three days straight.

LEO. Why break your streak? (*Laughter.*)

VERA. Emma?

MEL. Do you want to lie down? You know, you don't have to talk to us.

BEN. (*Laughing.*) Yes she does.

VERA. (*To Leo.*) Did she hear me?

MEL. She's obviously / exhausted! Who wouldn't be?

LEO. Emma! (*Leo points to Vera.*)

EMMA. I don't need to lie down, I'm fine. Yes, Grandma.

VERA. You could speak a little slower, and restate your point at the end. From the standpoint of propaganda. It was also too long, especially considering the weather.

LEO. Other than that, it was perfect. (*They all laugh.*)

MEL. It *was* perfect. You are a / born speaker.

BEN. All those privileged white kids, their jaws dropping, like "Did she just call me lazy? At my law school graduation?" / Fantastic.

LEO. It was good stuff, Emma. Tough stuff.

VERA. Well, excuse me, no one told me that honest criticism was not allowed.

EMMA. I appreciate your thoughts, Grandma.

VERA. It seems to me you're going to make a lot of speeches, over the course of your — so it's good to learn something, right? What you said about Joe, and the blacklist, and — it was wonderful. It was just wonderful and I wish he could've heard it.

EMMA. Thank you.

MEL. Oh! Maxine.

BEN. Right. Your mom called here. She says big hug, and no pressure to call but she'll be up late if you can. (*To Mel.*) Thank you. (*With an envelope for Emma.*) And this is from Jane.

MEL. From Jane and Peter.

BEN. From — from my sister and that guy she married, right.

EMMA. (*To everyone.*) You guys really didn't think it was too aggressive? My speech?

BEN. No.

LEO. You walked a line.

EMMA. Is that a yes, Uncle Leo?

LEO. (*Equivocally.*) Uh, no, it's not.

BEN. You can't fight for change and be a nice guy, you can't / have both.

AFTER THE REVOLUTION

by Amy Herzog

4M, 4W

The brilliant, promising Emma Joseph proudly carries the torch of her family's Marxist tradition, devoting her life to the memory of her blacklisted grandfather. But when history reveals a shocking truth about the man himself, the entire family is forced to confront questions of honesty and allegiance they thought had been resolved. **AFTER THE REVOLUTION** is a bold and moving portrait of an American family, thrown into an intergenerational tailspin, forced to reconcile a thorny and delicate legacy.

"AFTER THE REVOLUTION is a shrewd, ironic meditation on what we do with history, how we appropriate it for our own psychological needs. Among the play's many pleasures — a firm grasp of historical paradox, sharp dialogue — the most satisfying is the way the characters struggle through their differences to listen to one another. The ability to listen is, perhaps, the definition of love. Herzog's accomplishment is to trap this rare sense of connection."

—The New Yorker

"...crackles with intelligence and is laced with welcome wit." —BackStage

"... smart, engrossing ... Ms. Herzog elucidates the personal history of three generations of Josephs with impressive ease, in scenes that crackle with lively, natural dialogue that illuminates the underlying strains in this unusual clan, always happier to argue the legacies of Stalin and Castro than to explore the pain they cause one another."

—The New York Times

"... a refreshing refusal to grant the audience easy answers."

—The New York Press

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