



ALL THE RAGE

BY MARTIN MORAN



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ALL THE RAGE was produced by
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ALL THE RAGE was developed with the generous support of
La Jolla Playhouse (Christopher Ashley, Shirley Fishman);
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Naked Angels (Tuesdays@9, Joe Danisi);
Two River Theater (John Dias and Stephanie Coen);
The Paramount Theater (Bruce Bouchard)
and Music Theater Group (Diane Wondisford).

For David Francis Moran
Beloved Brother, Teacher and Poet
1965 – 2009

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The playwright would like to acknowledge the profound contribution of the director, Seth Barrish, toward realizing the spirit and structure of this work.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is a work of nonfiction. It is also the work of dreams and memory.

Some names and identifying details have been altered to honor the privacy of individuals.

ALL THE RAGE was produced by piece by piece productions and Rising Phoenix Repertory in association with The Barrow Group at The Peter Jay Sharp Theater in New York City, opening on January 30, 2013. It was directed by Seth Barrish; the set design was by Mark Wendland; the costume design was by Clint Ramos; the lighting design was by Russell H. Champa; the sound design was by Leon Rothenberg; the video design was by Bart Cortright; the production manager was Robert Saenz De Viteri; general management was by Snug Harbor Productions; and the production stage manager was Tom Taylor. It was performed by Martin Moran.

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ALL THE RAGE

In a simple room a globe, a lamp and a laptop computer sit atop a long wooden table. There is a chair, a knapsack and a projector/visual presenter on an AV cart. Off to either side, not quite in sight, stand two large blackboards. Attached to one of them is a large New York City subway map and to the other, a large map of Africa.

Martin enters and switches on the table lamp illuminating the globe and instantly darkening the house lights. He then pulls the chain of an overhead light so that the stage space is warmly lit.

MARTIN. Good evening all. So glad, of all the many places you might've landed on this (winter's) eve, you found your way here. Welcome and thanks for switching off your cell phones and beepers and buzzers and such. Can you hear me OK there in the back? Oh ... good.

I am, well, I'm dying to tell you about this dream I had. But first, let me tell you about the fight I had with my father's wife.

It happened in sunny Las Vegas (*He sits on the table to spin the globe.*) right about here on the old globe. Can you see that? Great state of Nevada? So, this fight was on a June morning, eight years ago. Happened to be the morning of my father's funeral and his wife and I were facing one another — just the two of us — across a table on the back patio of the stucco house she shared with my dad and we were ...

Well, actually there's a bit of history here.

I first met my father's wife — never could say stepmother — back when I was sixteen, almost seventeen. Not only was I "Head Boy," class president, at Denver's George Washington High School. But I was also just then playing "Jesus" in the spring musical, *Godspell*. And

my recently divorced dad said he was bringing his “new friend” to the show so I could meet her. So, right after curtain call, as soon as I could get out of my Christ costume, I headed to the school lobby. God, who’s this gal gonna be? And there they were standing near the large portrait of our first president. I noticed Dad’s lady friend and George Washington had the exact same hairdo; though hers was dyed red, and the second I laid eyes on her it was just so immediate, this terrifying antipathy. “My God,” I thought, “she’s so loud, so large, so *alien*, so many cigarettes and these —” (*Beginning to indicate an unflattering physical aspect of her face, he suddenly stops himself.*)

I’m going to call her Joyce.

Turned out Joyce lived in Dad’s condo complex across Leetsdale Avenue not far from school and it was there, in the community room, over vodka tonics; that she met her new neighbor — my dad. A few months and several cocktails later they announced their plans to wed. I knew this was my father’s bid for happiness but I just couldn’t reconcile his being with this person who, between puffs, bad-mouthed my mom. Or, snapped at the waiters at Denny’s. I knew Joyce had been through some kind of hell. Lost her father when she was a kid; had this difficult immigrant mother. I *felt* for her, somehow. Her effort: the red rinse, the piles of makeup, the various girdles and belts reining in all the — (*Stops himself, again.*)

Well, soon after finishing up my stint as Jesus, I was over at Dad’s and on some impulse I took the elevator three floors up from his studio apartment to hers and knocked. Surprise. She looked rather shaken at the sight of me and I understood, President Jesus calling. She gestured for me to sit, lit up a Virginia Slim and said,

“What do you want?”

“Joyce, looks like we’re gonna be family. Maybe we should try ...”

She pointed two pink nails, the two featuring a fuming tip, right toward my face, fixed me with a stare and said,

“You know something? I’ve got your number.”

“Oh really?”

“Yeah. You’re a big fat phony.”

My throat like ... *uhh*, clamped shut. Her eye — keen eye — conveyed that she saw right through “Head Boy,” straight to the tainted secrets: my disgust for her, my already checkered past, my

paralyzing crush on every member of the boy's basketball team. She blew her smoke and I mumbled something like, "God, what a bitch." And she said,

"What did you say!"

"Oh ... I ... nothing ... take care."

I left and, not quite intending to, slammed the door.

And so, it began. "The Thirty Years War." Or, "Cold War." A string of nasty disputes. Like one night, after she and Dad had moved to Vegas (after I'd already pissed her off by flipping over the George Bush photo stuck to the fridge) I made the mistake of bringing up the gambling problem.

"Look, Joyce, calm down, all I'm saying is the gambling could bankrupt you and Dad and ..." Pow! Banished, two years, Siberia. She wouldn't speak to me. Or, another evening when we were having Chinese at the Golden Nugget's all-you-can-eat buffet and Dad went off to the loo, she leaned forward and whispered,

"You have something to tell your father, don't you? You want me to just say it? You're a homosexual. How could you do that to your family?"

Ahhhhh!

I ran, found a payphone in a corner of the casino; got ahold of my NY shrink.

"The thing is ... OK, look, I mean ... I think this is like ... hatred. I actually HATE her. It's so huge this loathing. It's not like she's a Hitler, but I'm imagining a hatchet to her head. Or, machine guns. It's frightening!! What is this?"

She-shrink said,

"Perhaps this fury is an invitation."

"An invitation to what? To kill her?"

"No, to awake, to grow." (*A take to the audience: "Grow?"*)

Well, OK anyway: the big fight, on the morning of the funeral.

I arrived in Vegas and went straight to the mortuary. Thank God I had a few moments alone with Dad in this sort of makeshift chapel. Though there was an organist behind a curtain, coughing; playing "Danny Boy" off-key. I stepped out of the chapel and spotted Joyce beyond this tinted plate-glass window. She was moving alone through the mortuary parking lot, dragging a green oxygen tank on a little wagon. She walked in, stuck a finger in my face and said,

"I have a bone to pick with you."

My jaw clenched: *Om Mani Padme Hum, Om ...* this was my latest mantra, *Om Mani Padme*, ancient Sanskrit. It means, essentially, “The Road to Freedom Is Lit by Compassion.” *Om Mani Padme Hum, Om mani ...* a phrase to be repeated, I suppose, till convinced.

So I *Omed* and avoided her all through the brief ceremony and the reception at the house and then, just as I made the move to escape to the airport, she cornered me on the back patio up against Dad’s rose bushes.

“How dare you,” she said, “allow your mother’s name to appear in your father’s obituary.”

“What? How dare I? She was the mother of his children.”

“Hardly. I did more to raise your little sister and your angry little brother David than she ever — ”

“What are you talking about Joyce? And you, you made it so difficult for Dad these last — ”

“Oh, you have no idea who we were to each other,” she said. “Always treating us like second-class citizens.”

“That’s not true, Joyce, I ... (*Martin mutters: “Om Mani Padme arggh!”*)

It went back and forth as we circled this glass-top table under the slatted patio covering. At some point we perched on chairs but the rage, the left-brain chatter was gearing up, saying: *For once in your life Marty, be strong; give her a real piece of your mind!* So I stood — *off with her freakin’ head* — leaned forward to — I don’t know, smack, throttle her, *finally* scream in her face? There were these bands of sun across her cheek and I watched my arm reach over and a hand, my hand, place itself on top of hers. (*Pause.*)

There was the gurgle from the filter in the swimming pool; my heartbeat, but the air was perfectly still, electric and her face just ... emerged. Joyce. Her eyes ... *green*. And we, we just sat and *beheld* one another. After a while she squeezed my hand and said,

“I know you lost your daddy today too. I’m sorry.”

“Me, too, Joyce. I’m sorry.”

Joyce’s daughter poked her head out to check if we’d drawn blood. When she caught sight of the two of us holding hands, she vanished. The filter gurgled, the desert sun blazed and then Joyce got up, and I got up — as if being lived in a dream — and we moved around the table, and embraced.

And when I left; walked toward my rent-a-car, I kept thinking,

I'm still thinking: "What happened? Wow, was that...? What in the world was that?"

And that same week, the week of the fight and the funeral, (*Switching off the table lamp, Martin crosses down left to flick on another overhead light and to retrieve a book from the knapsack.*) a book and a one-man play that I wrote were published. Both of the same subject ... *me*. A kind of Growing-up-Catholic memoir. A true account of my attempt to sort out; make sense of having been sexually abused as a kid. (We're not going down that path tonight.) But molested from age twelve to fifteen by a camp counselor. This flannel-wearing, mountain-climbing; much older guy named *Bob*. And in the end, ultimately the story, with all the hurt and chaos, my story was really about, you know? *Forgiveness*. Compassion will set you free! Peace with the past and I really thought I'd *arrived* at this moment in life. A kind of: I've-written-a-thoughtful-three-hundred-page-book-Zen moment. Worked it all out. Told the story. Closure. Liberty. Peace!

But that very week, just as peace was settling in, an article appeared in my hometown newspaper, *The Denver Post*. A response to my memoir. (*He pulls from his pack a copy of the Post article that features a photo of him as a boy. Referring to photo.*) Oh, that's a picture of me as a kid, by the way. (*Sets the book down, grabs reading glasses from the pack.*) Allow me to quote a couple of lines.

"... When a story hits that close to home ... you get angry, even though Moran is not ... most troubling is his continued reluctance to despise or even blame his molester ... makes one wonder if he ever will truly move on ..."

Well, reading this in hometown print just unhinged, unmanned me. I was so embarrassed. It's like I was being called out for missing an essential piece. For skipping, or basically being frightened of, *anger*. And actually, I get this a lot. Like when I read from the book or perform the one-man play, people will often ask: "Where is your anger?" And, I got to tell you, it pisses me off.

But as maddening as this question is, it has become a central riddle ... an obsession. I mean: *Where IS my anger?*

So, two years later ... (*He dashes up stage, turns on another light and pulls into view a rolling chalkboard on which we see the map of the New York City subway system and several bright red magnets. He grabs a magnet and affixes the Post article to the board next to the map.*) ... a spring evening 2007, I'm marching up Cabrini Boule-

ALL THE RAGE

by Martin Moran

WINNER OF THE 2013 LUCILLE LORTEL AWARD
AND NOMINEE FOR THE 2013 OUTER CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD
FOR OUTSTANDING SOLO SHOW

1M

Martin wondered for most of his adult life about anger. Surely he should have more rage about the crime he experienced as a boy, shouldn't he? Everyone thinks so. The question haunts him and sends him on a quest from west of the Rockies to south of Johannesburg. Jumping from dream to memory to fact, he finds himself in an electric encounter with his fuming stepmother, lost in Africa with a guide who can't read maps, in a room translating the details of an asylum seeker's torture. With equal parts honesty and entertainment, ALL THE RAGE attempts to solve an ancient human riddle: How is it that one moment we might reach out in compassion and the next ... kill?

"Profoundly touching. This soulful show leads you into thought-and-emotion-stirring territory that you don't often visit at the theater." —**The New York Times**

"... brilliant, funny and touching." —**The New Yorker**

"A potent and deeply moving monologue about living with forgiveness without getting all mushy about it. Don't miss this gem of a show!" —**Bloomberg News**

"Heartwarming and hilarious!" —**BackStage**

"... a riveting new solo show." —**Broadway.com**

Also by Martin Moran
THE TRICKY PART

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