



FINKS

BY JOE GILFORD



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



FINKS
Copyright © 2013, Joe Gilford

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of FINKS is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission for which must be secured from the Author's agent in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for FINKS are controlled exclusively by DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., and paying the requisite fee.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to Abrams Artists Agency, 275 Seventh Avenue, 26th Floor, New York, NY 10001. Attn: Sarah L. Douglas.

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce FINKS is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. The name of the Author must appear on a separate line, in which no other name appears, immediately beneath the title and in size of type equal to 50% of the size of the largest, most prominent letter used for the title of the Play. No person, firm or entity may receive credit larger or more prominent than that accorded the Author. The following acknowledgments must appear on the title page in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play in size of type not less than 20% of the size used for the title of the Play:

FINKS received its New York premiere
at The Ensemble Studio Theatre
on March 28, 2013.

Originally presented by New York Stage and Film Company
and The Powerhouse Theater at Vassar on July 23, 2008.

SPECIAL NOTE ON SONGS AND RECORDINGS

For performances of copyrighted songs, arrangements or recordings mentioned in these Plays, the permission of the copyright owner(s) must be obtained. Other songs, arrangements or recordings may be substituted provided permission from the copyright owner(s) of such songs, arrangements or recordings is obtained; or songs, arrangements or recordings in the public domain may be substituted.

FINKS was presented by Ensemble Studio Theatre (William Carden, Artistic Director; Paul A. Slee, Executive Director) in New York City, opening on March 28, 2013. It was directed by Giovanna Sardelli; the scenic design was by Jason Simms; the costume design was by Sydney Maresca; the lighting design was by Gina Scherr; the sound design was by Jill BC DuBoff; the props master was Kate Lundell; and the production stage manager was Jillian Anderson. The cast was as follows:

MICKY	Aaron Serotsky
NATALIE	Miriam Silverman
BOBBY	Leo Ash Evens
FRED LANG	Ned Eisenberg
REPRESENTATIVE WALTERS	Michael Cullen
LYNCH/OTHERS	Jason Liebman
LARSON/OTHERS	Thomas Lyons
PIANO PLAYER/OTHERS	Kenney M. Green

CHARACTERS

MICKEY DOBBS, 35–45, a comedian and actor
NATALIE MELTZER, 28–35, an actress and activist
BOBBY GERARD, 30–35, a choreographer
FRED LANG, 40–50, an actor and painter
REPRESENTATIVE FRANCIS WALTER, 45–55,
 Chairman, House Committee on Un-American Activities
VICTOR LYNCH, 35–45, an attorney
STANLEY, 30–40, a director
PHIL LARSEN, 35–45, a talent agent
SOAP OPERA LEADING MAN, an actor
MARTIN BERKELEY, screenwriter
ELIA KAZAN, director
BUDD SCHULBERG, screenwriter
LEE J. COBB, actor
SERGEANT AT ARMS
ANNOUNCER
MAN WITH NOTEBOOK
EGGED MAN
BOOGIE-WOOGIE PIANISTS or LIVE PIANIST (optional)

TIME

New York City, 1950–1953.

PRODUCTION NOTES

A minimum cast consists of seven players: six male; one female. The New York premiere used eight players with the addition of a live pianist (preferably male African-American).

All material in the play is original except for dialogue within the testimonies of Schulberg, Kazan, Cobb and Berkeley. These are adapted, sometimes in composite, either from actual testimony transcript and/or public or published statements.

A NOTE ON DESIGN: Due to the fluid nature of time and locale, realistic sets are unnecessary. Imaginative use of audio and lighting is encouraged. If possible, the stage should be divided into four main playing areas where furnishings and props “live” throughout the action:

Apartments

The Chambers of the Congressional Committee

Café Society Nightclub

An open “utility” area for playing all other settings

A NOTE ON THE SONGS: There are two instances in Act One where the characters sing authentic musical standards of the period. In the original New York production those songs were “Sing Me a Song with Social Significance” (in the Benefit scene) and “The Investigator’s Song” (in the Club scene at the end of Act One). Both songs, by Harold Rome, have a unique relationship to the period and the politics of the characters. It is strongly suggested that these songs or songs of similar authenticity be used. All rights to these and any other copyrighted songs must be cleared with the copyright owners. For rights to use “Sing Me a Song with Social Significance” and “The Investigator’s Song,” contact:

Helene Blue Musique Ltd.

Blue Parasol

570 Seventh Avenue, Suite 2100

New York, NY 10018

www.helenebluemusic.com

FINKS

ACT ONE

Congressional Committee Chambers.

The committee room. A bustle of spectators and press; flash-bulbs — pop and fizzle — the sounds and flashes never let up.

SERGEANT AT ARMS. Come to order. We are now in session. Please come to order! (*Interrupting from offstage, the voice of a comic emcee, Mickey Dobbs.*)

MICKEY. (*Offstage.*) We have got quite a show for you. Everybody get a cool drink, a snack —

SERGEANT AT ARMS. Please come to order! (*Walking into his spotlight, Mickey Dobbs, a comedian in evening clothes at Café Society Nightclub.*)

MICKEY. Get your orders in before the show, the waiters need to get into character.

SERGEANT AT ARMS. Come to order, please! House Committee —

MICKEY. I'm here, you're here — We've got some very special guests, friends, acquaintances, wives, mistresses even ...

SERGEANT AT ARMS. COME TO ORDER! Please take your seats! Testimony before The House Committee on Un-American Activities —

MICKEY. Singers, jugglers, clowns — and yours truly!

SERGEANT AT ARMS. Please come to order!

MICKEY. I'm Mickey Dobbs. But you can call me Mickey Dobbs. Welcome to Café Society — the wrong place, for the right people —

SERGEANT AT ARMS. Honorable Francis Walter, Committee Chair. Please come to order! (*Special on: Representative Francis*

Walter who addresses a clot of press — flash, pop, jostle.) On behalf of this Committee, I want to state that this is not a witchhunt. We are entrusted here by the Internal Security Act of 1950, charged with the investigation of un-American and subversive activities. We cannot underestimate the ruthless passion with which these subversives approach their mission: to infiltrate and subvert our democratic system. MICKEY. (*Offstage.*) I have been doing a lot of reading lately. (*Lights crossfade to: Café Society Nightclub. Applause, laughter from the nightclub audience, Fred Lang sits ringside.*) I mean you can't keep up these days — Marx, Engels, Winchell — (*In the shadows, Natalie Meltzer enters and discreetly takes a dark corner table.*)

FRED. (*Calling out.*) Comrade, comrade!

MICKEY. Fred, take it easy with that “comrade” stuff. You'll get your whole table subpoenaed. Uh-oh — I just saw Barney Josephson, the owner, looking for a spare amendment — and his attorney!

FRED. Do Durante! Do Durante!

MICKEY. Not now, Fred!

FRED. Come on, Mickey — I can't get enough!

MICKEY. The way this guy hounds me — you could work for the FBI. Forgive me folks, this is what's known as a following.

MICKEY and AUDIENCE. “Been followin' me all night!”

FRED. Ba-da-bump! (*Rim shot! Mickey goes into Durante — without a nose or a hat.*)

MICKEY. (*As Durante.*) I'm walkin' down Broadway and who should I meet, but my old friend Izzy Arredonot. I ups and sez, “Izzy — are you a red — or not?” He ups and sez t'me: “How would I know — I stopped readin' Winchell and I don't know what the hell I am!” Ha, ha, ha! I got a million of 'em!

FRED. (*To audience.*) No nose! No hat! Comrade, you're a genius.

MICKEY. Enough, Fred! You'll get us all investigated! (*Flirting with Natalie.*) Madam — Was it good for you? Don't answer that. (*Nothing from Natalie.*) You've seen this bit how many times? Madam, I hope you used the password to get in here tonight: Luxion. I just found out that Joe McCarthy is about to expose two million more Communists. He just got his hands on the Moscow phone book. You can't be too careful these days. Everyone's scared, even us comedians. Red Buttons is so terrified, he changed his name to “blue.” It's gotten so bad, I heard you can't even borrow a book from the public library without someone tapping your telephone.

And they're right. I mean, what if you were seen reading — the Constitution? (*From offstage: sounds of a ruckus.*)

VOICE 1. Nigger lovers! Commies!

VOICE 2. Nazi assholes! (*A patron enters covered in raw eggs!*)

MICKEY. Democracy at work, folks — eggs any style!

REP. WALTER. (*Offstage.*) This Committee is very fortunate to count among us — (*Lights crossfade to: Congressional Committee Chambers. Walter stands with Victor Lynch, the chief investigator.*) — our chief investigator and counsel, Victor Lynch.

LYNCH. It is a great privilege to be part of this Committee. As we speak, my investigative team is compiling information on the subversive activities of hundreds of individuals who are within our government, inside the motion picture industry, and those who are attempting to bring the Communist message right into the living rooms of our homes through the channels of our televisions and radios.

REP. WALTER. Call the first witness please.

SERGEANT AT ARMS. The committee calls Mr. Martin Berkeley! (*Martin Berkeley, a plain, squirrely man, at the witness table.*)

REP. WALTER. Please state your name and occupation.

BERKELEY. Martin Berkeley. I am a writer of motion pictures.

REP. WALTER. Could you name some of the motion pictures that you have written?

BERKELEY. Yes, Mr. Chairman. (*A beat after each name, for response.*) Green Grass of Wyoming ... The Notorious Lone Wolf ... Dr. Gillespie's Criminal Case ...

REP. WALTER. A most distinguished list.

BERKELEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. WALTER. Now could you tell us about your activities as a member of the Communist Party?

BERKELEY. Yes, Mr. Chairman. I helped organize what was called the Working Artists Section. The meetings were held at my home in Beverly Glen in Los Angeles.

REP. WALTER. Would you tell us please the activities of this "Working Artists Section."

BERKELEY. We raised funds to encourage racial integration and equality in such areas as education and employment.

REP. WALTER. Racial integration?

BERKELEY. And equal education, Mr. Chairman.

REP. WALTER. (*Writing a note.*) I see. Please continue.

BERKELEY. We fostered partnership, understanding and peace between other nations and the United States —

REP. WALTER. — Including the Soviet Union.

BERKELEY. Yes, Mr. Chairman.

REP. WALTER. Could you now tell us please the names of others who were in attendance at these meetings?

BERKELEY. Certainly Mr. Chairman. (*Reads too quickly:*) ... Allan Campbell, Dorothy Parker, Gale Sondergaard, Jay Gorney, Herbert J. Biberman, Ring Lardner Jr. —

REP. WALTER. Mr. Berkeley if you wouldn't mind, a bit slower. Our stenographer can't quite keep up.

BERKELEY. Certainly, Mr. Chairman. (*Repeating a bit too slowly.*) ... Allan Campbell, Dorothy Parker, Gale Sondergard —

REP. WALTER. (*Interrupting.*) Gale Sondergaard? (*Shocked.*) *Anna & The King of Siam, The Life of Emile Zola?* That Gale Sondergaard?

BERKELEY. You certainly know your movies, Mr. Chairman.

REP. WALTER. You may continue.

BERKELEY. Jay Gorney, Herbert J. Biberman, Ring Lardner Jr., Dalton Trumbo, Albert Maltz ...

NATALIE. (*Offstage. A terrible shriek!*) AHHHHHHHHHH!
(*Lights crossfade to: radio studio. Natalie Meltzer, actress and activist, at a microphone. The voice of the director, Stanley, over a speaker.*)

STANLEY. (*Offstage.*) Can you give me one more?

NATALIE. What's the problem?

STANLEY. (*Offstage.*) Just more terror. (*A beat, as she prepares.*)

NATALIE. (*With more terror!*) AHHHHHHHHHHH!

STANLEY. (*Offstage.*) Perfect! Let's move on to the spot. (*Natalie pulls out flyers from her purse.*)

NATALIE. Did you all get one of these?

STANLEY. We've all got one, Natalie, yes. Okay, top of page. Roll please! (*Slate:*) "Desitin Ointment, family spot, take one!"

NATALIE. You coming?

STANLEY. Natalie, please. Stop tape!

NATALIE. It's gonna be a great show.

STANLEY. What is it this time, world peace?

NATALIE. You're against world peace?

STANLEY. Let's move on to the spot, please.

NATALIE. Christ, Stanley: You're gonna wake up one day without Social Security or, God forbid, you can't pay a hospital bill —

STANLEY. World peace is gonna pay my doctor bills?

NATALIE. Can you prove that it won't?
STANLEY. Can we move on to the spot?
NATALIE. There won't be any point to any goddamn spot if the world is dressed in rags, starving, without any health care.
STANLEY. If it's all the same to you, Natalie, I want to keep my job. Let's move on —
NATALIE. You've got the whole movement behind you, Stanley!
STANLEY. Now I feel better.
NATALIE. You're protected by the First Amendment — and me!
STANLEY. Roll tape. Take one. Action.
NATALIE. Day care for working women, better pay for teachers —
STANLEY. Stop tape!
NATALIE. — Fairness and decency to each other? Concern for our fellow man? None of those appeal to you?
STANLEY. The spot, Natalie.
NATALIE. Make a mitzvah. We really do have a great show — only two bucks a ticket.
STANLEY. We've only got the studio for five more minutes. Gimme a break, please!
NATALIE. You know the kind of girls that show up at these things.
STANLEY. Girls like you.
NATALIE. Smart and gorgeous!
STANLEY. I was gonna say fast and Jewish.
NATALIE. How many tickets? Two for a buck-fifty!
STANLEY. Okay! Okay! The spot ... please — NOW!
NATALIE. I don't care what people say Stanley, you're oh-kay!
STANLEY. Roll tape! (*Natalie pulls out a small throw pillow from her bag. She is joined by an announcer. Natalie buries her face in the pillow and does a perfect imitation of a crying baby. A few yelps, then, she speaks into the mic — playing all three roles.*)
LITTLE BOY. Gee, Mom, why's little Sally crying?
MOM. Well, Johnny, Sally's got diaper rash. (*She does a little more baby cry.*)
LITTLE BOY. What are we going to do?
MOM. We've got Desitin. That'll make Sally feel a lot better (*The baby calms down, gurgles.*) "There, y'see, she's feeling better already."
LITTLE BOY. Wow, Desitin works great! (*Happy gurgling baby!*)
ANNOUNCER. Nothing works better than Desitin. Pediatricians recommend Desitin with zinc oxide.
STANLEY. (*Offstage.*) ... And cut. Thanks.

FINKS

by Joe Gilford

7M, 1W

On the verge of TV stardom, comic Mickey Dobbs meets actress and activist Natalie Meltzer, and their romance blossoms — as does the risk that they'll be blacklisted for their political activities. In the face of the House Un-American Activities Committee, tasked with exposing communist subversion in New York's entertainment world, Mickey and Natalie endure the absurd and tragic process that victimized entertainers and turned friends and colleagues against each other. For some, the blacklist will mean a decade without work. For others, it will spell the end of their careers. And those who willingly testify — naming others to the committee — will be branded as “finks.” In FINKS, Joe Gilford documents the struggle his parents, entertainers Jack Gilford and Madeline Lee Gilford, endured when they were called to testify.

“Joe Gilford’s impassioned, autobiographical FINKS ... is a testament to the parents who managed to maintain their indomitable spirit throughout the ordeal.”

—**HuffingtonPost.com**

“... a bracing play about McCarthyism.”

—**The New York Times**

“Forget blue jokes; the humor in FINKS, Joe Gilford’s farsighted yet tender tribute to his blacklisted parents, is distinctly red. But it’s part of what makes this play ... as Gilford tries to understand why some of the accused betrayed friends to keep their livelihoods, he demonstrates a pluck similar to that of his parents.”

—**Time Out New York**

ISBN 978-0-8222-2972-8



DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

9 780822 229728