



# CORE VALUES

BY STEVEN LEVENSON



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CORE VALUES  
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Jason Eagan, Artistic Director; Jeremy Blocker, Managing Director

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CORE VALUES was presented by Ars Nova (Jason Eagan, Artistic Director; Jeremy Blocker, Managing Director) in New York City, opening on May 6, 2013. It was directed by Carolyn Cantor; the set design was by Lauren Helpert; the costume design was by Emily Rebholz; the lighting design was by Traci Klainer Polimeni; the sound design was by M. L. Dogg; and the production stage manager was Christina Lowe. The cast was as follows:

ELIOT ..... Erin Wilhelmi  
TODD ..... Paul Thureen  
RICHARD ..... Reed Birney  
NANCY ..... Susan Kelechi Watson

## **CHARACTERS**

ELIOT, 22

TODD, 31

RICHARD, 47

NANCY, 36

## **SETTING**

A conference room in an anonymous office building located on a sad and filthy street in Manhattan, replete with wholesale plastic jewelry stores, long-term parking lots, and badly lit storefront massage parlors with once-colorful and now long-faded anatomical diagrams of human feet hung in the windows.

## **TIME**

Winter.

NB: Though the play is divided into two sections, it should be performed without an intermission.

# CORE VALUES

## I. SATURDAY

### One

*Darkness.*

*In the dark, the sound of waves cresting and crashing, lapping the shoreline of some distant white sandy beach somewhere else.*

*After some time, it cuts out completely and we are here: a conference room without windows.*

*Silent and dark and shabbily carpeted.*

*The color palette is puke: puke grays, puke greens, a gentle soothing puke brown conference table.*

*Unused binders, obsolete promotional materials, and boxes of dead files have been stowed away in the dusty corners.*

*On the wall, a poster, a cheeseball aerial portrait of an unblemished jewel-toned seascape: "Sandals!"*

*The door opens and Eliot enters, holding two plastic shopping bags and a small paper cup of tea, which she sets down on the table.*

*She wears a puffy winter coat and a long scarf.*

*She flips on the fluorescent lights.*

*She stands there for a second, looking around, trying to catch her breath from the cold outside.*

*She rifles through the shopping bags and pulls out far too many miniature water bottles.*

*She carefully, methodically lays them on the table.*

*We think she's done but then she reaches into her purse and takes out several more.*

*She takes a moment and counts the bottles.*

*She tries to arrange them all into some kind of pyramid-type shape.*

*She fails.*

*She fixes it, sort of.*

*She sees the dry-erase board, which someone has hastily erased, leaving a small, nearly indistinct doodle in the corner.*

*She looks for an eraser.*

*She can't find one.*

*She uses the heel of her hand to rub away the doodle.*

*She looks at her hand, frowns.*

*She slowly brings her hand up to her face.*

*She smells her hand.*

*She frowns.*

*She reaches into her coat and pulls out another bottle. An afterthought.*

# CORE VALUES

by Steven Levenson

2M, 2W

With the world around him changing at a dizzying pace, the owner of a small, struggling travel agency clings to the values he holds most dear: teamwork, loyalty and the incalculable importance of a good trust fall. It takes a weekend staff retreat, however, for him to realize that his team-building exercises won't stave off the realities of a rapidly evolving marketplace. In a graying conference room, CEO Richard and three of his employees — Nancy, an ambitious salesperson with an ailing young son; Todd, the tech guy with poor phone skills; and Eliot, the new girl — are expected to review sales reports, perform trust exercises and set long-term goals for an increasingly uncertain future. Divorced single dad Richard, meanwhile, is just looking to keep his business — and himself — together.

*"Sing, Muse of the Great Recession: a dramatic landscape in which striving for greatness has been replaced by grasping at straws. Steven Levenson's laugh-out-loud funny, sigh-out-loud sad new play captures the spirit of the age; and it will feel all too familiar to anyone who's ever found themselves caught in the hamster wheel of a dying industry."*

—**Time Out New York**

*"Anyone who has done time in a corporate environment will recognize the soul-killing atmosphere conjured all too precisely in CORE VALUES."*

—**The New York Times**

*"... an entertaining piece, with many genuinely funny, laugh-out-loud moments."*

—**TheaterMania.com**

*"Steven Levenson's astute new play is a comedy, though a dark one ... a well-observed study of a dysfunctional workplace, with hilarious one-liners and sight gags ... But it becomes progressively bleaker in its depiction of the characters' inability to connect."*

—**The New York Post**

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