

**A PUBLIC READING  
OF AN UNPRODUCED  
SCREENPLAY ABOUT  
THE DEATH OF  
WALT DISNEY**

**BY LUCAS HNATH**



**DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.**

A PUBLIC READING OF AN UNPRODUCED SCREENPLAY  
ABOUT THE DEATH OF WALT DISNEY  
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A PUBLIC READING OF AN UNPRODUCED SCREENPLAY  
ABOUT THE DEATH OF WALT DISNEY  
had its World Premiere at Soho Rep.  
Sarah Benson, Artistic Director; Cynthia Flowers, Executive Director

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*Dedicated to Jyana Browne and Andrew Grusetskie*

## **SPECIAL THANKS**

This play was created through a series of workshops directed by Jyana Browne and starring Ryan Bronz, Andrew Grusetskie, Mike Mihm, and Amy Staats. Without these extraordinary theatre artists, the play would not exist.

Additionally thanks must be given to Sarah Benson and Raphael Martin; Julie Crosby, Megan Carter, and the Women's Project; Reed Birney, Michael Chernus, Heidi Schreck, and Thomas Jay Ryan; Dan Dinero, Jim Knable, and David Ross; and Pat C. Hoy II.

## HOW TO PLAY IT

All actors present at the reading table for the entire duration of the play. No one exits or enters.

Indented lines are screen directions read by Walt. Avoid pantomiming or attempting to represent onstage those screen directions. Minimal blocking is best; leave much to the imagination. The italicized stage directions will tell you what actions should be enacted.

Read it swiftly without rushing. Let the lines flow seamlessly from one to the next. Never let it get staccato.

Be especially careful of Walt's "cut to" lines. As a general rule, let there be absolutely no air between the "cut to" and the lines that precede and follow it.

The script tells you where you can catch a breath (...); otherwise, keep it moving.

Avoid pushing too hard on the "emotional intonation" of each individual line. Inflection takes time, and you don't have that much time.

The rhythm and musical effect of the language is king.

## NOTES ON MUSIC

Two pieces of music are used in the play. Throughout all of the workshops, I used Arvo Pärt's "*Spiegel im Spiegel*" as the "lullaby" that bookends the play. However, once we were in production, we decided that the Pärt piece was a bit too familiar. Sound designer Matt Tierney suggested a more obscure Satie song, "*Petite ouverture à danser*." Either way, both the Pärt and the Satie loop seamlessly and work well as pre-show music.\*

The Schumann that's used twice within the play is "*Seit ich ihn gesehen*."

\* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

A PUBLIC READING OF AN UNPRODUCED SCREENPLAY ABOUT THE DEATH OF WALT DISNEY was presented by Soho Rep (Sarah Benson, Artistic Director; Cynthia Flowers, Executive Director; Caleb Hammons, Producer) in New York City, opening on May 10, 2013. It was directed by Sarah Benson; the set design was by Mimi Lien; the costume design was by Kaye Voyce; the lighting design was by Matt Frey; the sound design was by Matt Tierney; and the production stage manager was Heather Arnson. The cast was as follows:

WALT ..... Larry Pine  
DAUGHTER .....Amanda Quaid  
RON..... Brian Sgambati  
ROY..... Frank Wood

## **CHARACTERS**

WALT, chain-smokes the entire play.

ROY, brother, Band-Aid over his left temple.

DAUGHTER, more or less motherly.

RON MILLER, son-in-law, dumb jock, a Golden Retriever of a person.

## **STAGE**

Set up for a reading.

A table cluttered with the stuff a cast might need for a day of table work. Chairs for the actors.

*You can't just let nature run wild.*

— Walt Disney



# A PUBLIC READING OF AN UNPRODUCED SCREENPLAY ABOUT THE DEATH OF WALT DISNEY

*Music. Repetitive. Piano. Strings. Lulling lullaby. Like a storm coming. Trouble brewing. Actor/Walt enters.*

WALT.

Takes out a cigarette.

Lights cigarette.

Smokes.

*(Walt smokes.)*

Smokes.

*(Adjusts volume of speakers as needed.)*

*(Down to business.)*

*(Readies his script.)*

I'm Walt Disney.

This is a screenplay I wrote.

It's about me.

Fade in. Fade in on me,

Walt, fade in on Walt, fade in on Walt.

Walt. Close on Walt.

Walt is good.

Walt is doing good, looking good, looking good for his age, age or no age looking good. Walt is quick and smart and sharp and great.

And rich and loved  
and richer than he's ever been  
and more loved than he's ever been.  
And he's doing great.  
And he can have anything he wants.

Fade in on Walt, where, Walt  
in a room, interior, day,  
me in room, with Roy, the camera cuts to Walt's brother Roy,  
sitting to his

left, Roy to left, in a room, interior, day or night, and night and day,  
what room, doesn't matter what room, all kinds of rooms,  
all sorts, and all sorts of times, and

cut music.

Scene 1,  
In which Walt decides to start  
making Nature Documentaries.

ROY.  
awful late.

WALT.

Interior night.  
working

ROY.  
middle of the night

WALT.  
thought you'd be asleep

ROY.  
having trouble

WALT.  
sleeping

ROY.  
just can't seem to

WALT.

Interior, work office.  
Follow me Roy.

ROY.

the dog, the

WALT.

family

ROY.

dog

WALT.

Teddy

ROY.

not doing well

WALT.

the camera cuts to a picture of Roy's dog Teddy

ROY.

little back legs

WALT.

Close on back legs

ROY.

not working anymore, vet put it in a little wheel cart, little

WALT.

yeah

ROY.

pulls itself along with its front legs

WALT.

can't let

ROY.

having a real hard time, crying all night, stroke its ears, stroke its legs til it sleeps

WALT.

technology ... can fix almost anything, anything, almost anything, most, many things

ROY.

still, scary

WALT.

and Close on Walt and Close on Roy

ROY.

doctors

WALT.

saw one the other

ROY.

you're

WALT.

no just a

ROY.

having

WALT.

back problems, neck and shoulder,

doctor said it was some sort of calcification,

gave me pills,

taking pills,

pain pills, pills help,

a little, not much,

pills, a little drink, smoke, pills, pain

ROY.

exercise

WALT.

oh sure

ROY.

That's good

WALT.

10 jumping jacks in the morning

ROY.

nice

WALT.

hot water baths

ROY.

nice

WALT.

cut to

And the wife says

ROY.

how is she?

WALT.

shouldn't work so much, she says

ROY.

haven't seen

WALT.

she travels

ROY.

okay

WALT.

visiting relatives

ROY.

nice, it must

WALT.

not really

ROY.

kinda lonely

WALT.

no

ROY.

just

WALT.

cut to

And they all say,

well, he just does cartoons

ROY.

they?

WALT.

say

ROY.

about

WALT.

me

ROY.

okay

WALT.

it's like

ROY.

they like

WALT.

sure

ROY.

everything you do is so

WALT.

likeable

ROY.

so wonderful about

WALT.

but not so

# A PUBLIC READING OF AN UNPRODUCED SCREENPLAY ABOUT THE DEATH OF WALT DISNEY

by Lucas Hnath

3M, 1W

Tonight, Walt is going to read you a screenplay he wrote. It's about his last days on earth. It's about a city he's going to build that's going to change the world. And it's about his brother. It's about everyone who loves him so much, and it's about how sad they're going to be when he's gone. Right? I mean, how can they live without him? How can anyone live without him?

*"... a blackly comic inversion of the public Disney persona, in the form of a stylized screenplay being read in an anonymous-looking corporate conference room ... Walt would be doing cartoonish gyrations in his grave if he were to see how thoroughly Mr. Hnath (pronounced nayth) has subverted the popular image of Disney."*

—The New York Times

*"Minutes into the darkly humorous play it's clear that for the famous man who made Mickey Mouse, movies and the Magic Kingdom, everything was about him. Always. Especially during his last days on earth."*

—The New York Daily News

*"... a devastating portrait of a man for whom make-believe was more real than reality itself."*

—The New York Post

*"A blood-pumping and often hilarious evening of theater."*

—TheaterMania.com

*"Enjoyably weird and hermetic ... Nothing that ever came out of the Magic Kingdom was ever this animated."*

—Time Out (New York)

Also by Lucas Hnath  
THE CHRISTIANS  
DEATH TAX  
ISAAC'S EYE

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