



ROW AFTER ROW
BY JESSICA DICKEY



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SPECIAL THANKS

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ROW AFTER ROW was presented by Women's Project Theater, (Julie Crosby, Artistic Director; Lisa Fane, Managing Director) at City Center Stage II in New York City, opening on January 23, 2014. It was directed by Daniella Topol; the set and costume designs were by Clint Ramos; the lighting design was by Tyler Micoeau; the sound design was by Broken Chord; the fight choreography was by J. David Brimmer; and the production stage manager was Jess Johnston. The cast was as follows:

LEAH Rosie Benton
TOM Erik Lochtefeld
CAL P.J. Sosko

CHARACTERS

CAL — Mid- to late thirties, bearded, despite often sounding like a d-bag, he is very lovable and likable. Capable of change.

Cal also plays General Longstreet.

TOM — Mid- to late thirties, spectacles, repressed, tries very hard to keep things nice, polite, harmonious. He adores Cal and has fun with him.

Tom also plays the Union Deserter.

LEAH — Mid-thirties, naturally tough and independent, also sensual in an authentic way. She loves a good discussion and holds her own very well.

Leah also plays a Confederate Soldier.

NOTE ABOUT THE TEXT

/ Slashes indicate overlapping

() Parenthesis indicate a slight throw away, or slightly lower in volume.

PRODUCTION SUGGESTIONS

The repartee of Cal and Leah should feel a lot like that of Beatrice and Benedick.

In general the pace should be very bright and quick. The speeches can breathe more.

There is a continuity of character between the present day and 1863. Don't feel the need to play them as different people.

I strongly suggest avoiding Southern accents.

The past and the present live very closely together in this play, and figuring out how to express that in the transitions between 1863 and the present is one of the main creative challenges. Having now had the opportunity to participate in three productions of ROW AFTER ROW, I thought it would be helpful to share some of my observations ... I'll borrow from two of my collaborators —

Daniella Topol (director for the Women's Project production) often described how the present action would allow the characters to "crack" into the past, like a sudden bolt (with the exception of Longstreet's final speech) ... While David Bradley (director for the People's Light production) was fond of saying that journeying back to the present was like passing through a kind of membrane ... I like both these descriptions because they are evocative and sensual, but they also allow for mystery. Therefore I suggest: When cracking into the past, be bold, and when slipping back to the present, be sensitive and supple.

—Jessica Dickey
November 2014

ROW AFTER ROW

Longstreet, alone in a single light.

LONGSTREET/CAL. More Perfect ... So be it.

(Suddenly lights and sound shift — Pickett's Charge. The sound of a raging battle — marching, bodies, cannon fire, struggle, guns. The roar of war. Watching the charge.) Come on Colonel Pickett swing left

SWING LEFT

Tighten that line boys

Goddamn

DESERTER/TOM. *(Scampers in.)* You did it you piece of shit, you're free! *(The cannons and roar make him cover his ears for a moment.)*

Gotta find shelter

Move your legs and RUN. *(He scampers to another spot.)*

LONGSTREET/CAL. Look at my boys go ATTA BOYS!

Toward the trees!

Goddamn

DESERTER/TOM. Gotta hide 'til the area clears

Gotta hide gotta hide gotta hide gotta hide

LONGSTREET/CAL. My God

There's the stone wall —

My Men! My God!

DESERTER/TOM. There's a house! I see the cellar door — ! *(He runs off.)*

LEAH. *(Clutching a Confederate uniform.)* I've never seen so many men in my life!

They march through town

and I cannot look away!

LONGSTREET/CAL. FIX BAYONETS!

God help us — !

CHARGE!

(A final massive blast. Then — Major lights shift into — The side room

of an old pub in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Lots of dark wood, Civil War tchotchkes. Leah is sitting at a small table alone with a beer. She is dressed still in her Civil War re-enactment clothes, a gray uniform. After a moment Tom and Cal enter, deep in fraternal, heated discussion. They are in full, head-to-toe authentic Civil War regalia.)

CAL. Pickett's Charge kills me, dude — it just fuckin' KILLS ME — every year!! The South was WINNING! — until Pickett's Charge!! — And then boom — the tide of the war turned. It could have been prevented.

TOM. That's easy to say cuz it was such a fuckin' disaster. You were very good today, by the way.

CAL. Was I really?

TOM. Oh absolutely dude. You were having a Wargasm.

CAL. (*Genuinely touched.*) Thanks dude. That means a lot. (*Suddenly a school boy.*) Who brought that new cannon?! That thing was THE BOSS. Shouting over that gave me the GIGGLES. (*They stop in their tracks and see Leah sitting at their table. An awkward moment — what to do?*) Um. Ma'am? (*She doesn't look up. Louder.*) Ma'am?

LEAH. Are you talking to me?

TOM. Uh, yeah — Hello — Hi — Have you been — sitting here long?

LEAH. Um — ???

CAL. Did Ron see you come in?

LEAH. Ron?

CAL. Yeah, tall guy, kinda looks like a Sasquatch ...

LEAH. Um ...

CAL. Yeah, cuz the thing is we usually —

TOM. Yeah, sorry, Hi, what he's trying / — to say —

CAL. Cuz if Ron saw you he probably would've told you —

LEAH. I don't know if it was "Ron" but I mean I ordered my beer ... (*Awkward beat.*)

TOM. Okay that's fine, that's cool, UM, we will just sit — um — Somewhere else. That's cool.

CAL. (*Tom.*) (Are you out of your mind?) (*Leah.*) It's just that we usually sit here.

LEAH. Oh. / Uh huh.

TOM. Dude, it's cool, right? No big deal.

CAL. (*Tom.*) No big deal come on buddy this is our night — (*Leah.*) I'm sure you understand — (*He indicates their Civil War re-enactment garb.*) We're kind of traditionalists, if you know what I mean, so ...

LEAH. Okay.

TOM. Dude —

CAL. Tom, the lady seems to understand. Am I right?

LEAH. Yeah, I think so. You usually sit here.

CAL. Exactamundo.

TOM. Yes, we do, / but —

CAL. It's a tradition that every year after Gettysburg we come here and have a beer. Yes.

LEAH. Cool.

CAL. Yes, very. So ...

LEAH. So ... (*Awkward silence. She gestures to the other seats at the table.*) You assholes care to join me? (*Not what they were expecting.*)

CAL. That's — not — exactly —

TOM. — Absolutely. That's very kind of you. (*Tom sits; Cal complies.*) I'm Tom, 121st Pennsylvania. And this is my comrade Cal.

CAL. General Longstreet. Army of Northern Virginia.

LEAH. Don't mind me. You just do your "annual thing" and I'll enjoy my beer.

TOM. Oh. Alrighty.

CAL. Suits us just fine. (*They all sit awkwardly and drink their beer.*)

TOM. Well the weather was historically accurate — It was a hot one. (*After a long beat, Tom tries very hard to be congenial, like a host ...*)

So what were you?

LEAH. Oh we're going to talk?

TOM. Well, sure, why not.

LEAH. Alright then.

TOM. Um — I was just asking, Ms. — ??

LEAH. Leah.

TOM. Leah. What infantry were you?

LEAH. UM — I was Virginia as well. I forget which one. We lost, I know that. Ha ha.

TOM. Oh, uh huh. Yeah. So you're New. (*With a warning to Cal.*) Cal, she's New.

LEAH. Yeah. Very New.

TOM. Are you from out of town? Or — ?

LEAH. Yes, out of town. I just moved here actually.

TOM. Oh, I see. That's interesting. Where from?

LEAH. New York.

TOM. New York! New York City? Wowza! You know, I've always wanted to go to the Second Avenue Deli!

LEAH. It's closed.

TOM. Oh. Well. Welcome to Gettysburg. (*Awkward sipping of beer.*)

CAL. We knew you were New.

TOM. Cal —

LEAH. Oh yeah?

CAL. Yeah, you're Farbing all over the place.

TOM. Oh Christ.

CAL. You're what we call FARBTASTIC.

TOM. Calvin.

LEAH. I don't get it.

TOM. It's nothing. Cal, be a gentleman, okay?

CAL. What? I'm sure the little lady is interested.

TOM. Cal, she's NEW.

CAL. Exactly, so how's she supposed to know?

LEAH. Know what?

CAL. That you're FARBING.

LEAH. What's Farbing?

CAL. What's Farbing she wants to know. Tom, the lady would like to know what Farbing is.

TOM. Cal. Uh — (*To Leah.*) Farbing is kind of an inside term.

CAL. YEAH

TOM. Among us — re-enactors —

CAL. "Us re-enactors"? Dude, you act like you're ashamed.

TOM. It's when — What? I do not, I am not, I'm not ashamed, I'm just —

CAL. Okay okay, don't blow your bayonet, I just thought you sounded ashamed.

TOM. Well, I'm not. I'm not ashamed.

CAL. ("Us re-enactors")

TOM. (*Ignoring him.*) A Farb is when your gear or weaponry or uniform — uh — isn't up to — uh — ? — par.

LEAH. Par? As in —

TOM. Historical accuracy.

CAL. Yeah, as in WRONG.

LEAH. Huh.

CAL. Yeah, like your nose ring? No. Your jewelry? Uhn uhn. The color of the wool? Passable. The thread count? No. Mid 1900s, not 1863.

TOM. Okay awesome. Now that we've managed to completely alienate our new friend here.

LEAH. I still don't understand what Farbing is.

TOM. Farbing is a term used by us — re-enactors

CAL. (“Us re-enactors”)

TOM. (*Ignoring him.*) When something in one’s uniform or outfit or gear or behavior isn’t accurate to the historical context. It’s a major concern among us (*Catches himself.*) — UM — among committed re-enactors who — of course — consider themselves Living Historians. If you will.

LEAH. So “Farb” is an acronym? Or — ?

CAL. No one knows exactly where the term originated. I’ve Heard Tell —

TOM. (You’ve heard tell?)

CAL. — that it’s a combination of the words “fake” and “garb” — Thusly — “Farb.”

TOM. (Thusly?! Wow dude. You’re really on a roll here.)

CAL. BUT I PREFER the explanation used by some of the more hard core re-enactors that when we see an improper thread count, or a pair of anachronistic eye-wear, the re-enactor leans in to the Farbing offender and says, “FAR BE IT FROM ME” — to criticize what you’re wearing, or whatever ... I prefer to think that THAT is where the term “Farb” comes from.

LEAH. “FAR Be it from me.”

CAL. Yup.

TOM. “Thusly”

CAL. Farb.

LEAH. Huh.

CAL. You could also just think of it as “Fast And Research-less Buying.”

TOM. Anyway. There are some great resources in the local libraries or whatever, or you can even ask other re-enactors in your brigade for help in making sure your gear is appropriate, they can steer you toward the right vendors and such ...

CAL. A favorite of mine is Gun Creek Sutlery.

TOM. There’s also Rum Creek Sutlers

CAL. Dirty Billy’s Hats

TOM. Bug Hill Sutlery

CAL. Patsy’s Civil War Buckles

TOM. (that was a great sale last week)

CAL. (Wowza)

TOM. And of course there’s our own local Regimental Quartermaster, they’re right here in Gettysburg, right on the square there.

ROW AFTER ROW

by Jessica Dickey

2M, 1W

When two hard-core Civil War re-enactors show up for their annual Gettysburg beer and find a pretty stranger at their table, old allegiances come into question. Straddling 1863 and today, *ROW AFTER ROW* is a dark comedy about choosing your cause and finding your courage.

"[A] likeable comedy-drama ... lovely writing ... a funny, touching case for historical reenactment as useful therapy ..."

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"Jessica Dickey's funny, sad, deep, and smart play is beautifully written ..."

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"ROW AFTER ROW is an intelligent look into heretofore unexplored dramatic territory. Dickey should be commended for tapping into the fertile soil of historical reenactors and the reasons why people would willingly abandon the present world to live more comfortably in the past ..."

—**TheaterMania.com**

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