



# THE COUNTRY HOUSE

BY DONALD MARGULIES



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



THE COUNTRY HOUSE  
Copyright © 2015, Donald Margulies

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of THE COUNTRY HOUSE 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 THE COUNTRY HOUSE 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 William Morris Endeavor Entertainment, LLC, 1325 Avenue of the Americas, 15th Floor, New York, NY 10019. Attn: Derek Zasky.

**SPECIAL NOTE**

Anyone receiving permission to produce THE COUNTRY HOUSE is required to give credit to the Author(s) as sole and exclusive Author(s) 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, including printed or digital materials for advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. Please see your production license for font size and typeface requirements.

Be advised that there may be additional credits required in all programs and promotional material. Such language will be listed under the "Additional Billing" section of production licenses. It is the licensee's responsibility to ensure any and all required billing is included in the requisite places, per the terms of the license.

**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.

*For Dana Morosini Reeve*

THE COUNTRYHOUSE was originally commissioned by Manhattan Theatre Club (Lynne Meadow, Artistic Director; Barry Grove, Executive Producer), with funds provided by U.S. Trust. It received a world premiere co-production by Manhattan Theatre Club and the Geffen Playhouse (Randall Arney, Artistic Director; Ken Novice, Managing Director), opening at the Geffen Playhouse in Los Angeles, California on June 3, 2014. It was directed by Daniel Sullivan; the set design was by John Lee Beatty; the costume design was by Rita Ryack; the lighting design was by Peter Kaczorowski; the original music was by Peter Golub; the sound design was by Jon Gottlieb; and the production stage manager was Young Ji. The cast was as follows:

SUSIE KEEGAN ..... Sarah Steele  
WALTER KEEGAN ..... David Rasche  
ANNA PATTERSON..... Blythe Danner  
ELLIOT COOPER..... Eric Lange  
MICHAEL ASTOR..... Scott Foley  
NELL McNALLY ..... Emily Swallow

The world premiere co-production of THE COUNTRY HOUSE opened on Broadway at the Samuel J. Friedman Theatre on September 9, 2014. The cast and personnel remained the same, with the following exceptions: The sound design was by Obadiah Eaves; and the production stage manager was James FitzSimmons. Michael Astor was played by Daniel Sunjata, and Nell McNally was played by Kate Jennings Grant.

## CHARACTERS

SUSIE KEEGAN — twenty-one, a college student, plainly lovely.  
Her mother, Kathy, is recently deceased.

WALTER KEEGAN — sixty-six, a successful film and stage  
director, Susie's father.

ANNA PATTERSON — the matriarch, a great and famous  
actress, Susie's grandmother.

ELLIOT COOPER — forty-four, a failed actor and aspiring  
playwright, Susie's uncle on her mother's side.

MICHAEL ASTOR — forty-five, a ruggedly handsome and  
charismatic actor, a longtime family friend.

NELL McNALLY — early forties, an intelligent and inscrutable  
beauty, Walter's new actress-girlfriend.

## PLACE

A house in the Berkshires. Summer.

## **TIME**

### **ACT ONE**

Scene 1: Friday afternoon

Scene 2: Later that night

### **ACT TWO**

Scene 1: A few days later

Scene 2: Later that night

### *Intermission*

### **ACT THREE**

Scene 1: The following morning

Scene 2: Later that day

## **NOTE**

A slash (“ / ”) in the dialogue indicates the beginning of the next spoken line.

# THE COUNTRY HOUSE

## ACT ONE

### Scene 1

*A century-old house in the Berkshires, near Williamstown, Massachusetts, that has long been the summer home of a family of theater people. Bought for a song four decades ago, it has changed relatively little over the years, and what improvements that were made were done piecemeal. Still, it is not without charm. Secondhand furnishings, collected over decades, somehow work in concert to convey cozy, Bohemian chic. (Look closely and you will see the decay.) Warped wooden shelves are crammed with mildewed summer-reading paperbacks, arts-and-crafts made by two generations of children on rainy summer days, box games, and a motley assortment of sporting equipment. Vintage posters from the Williamstown Theatre Festival and framed, faded production stills adorn the walls. Screened French doors open onto a brick patio and a garden. A kitchen, dining room, and bathroom are accessible; a staircase leads to a warren of bedrooms on the second floor.*

*A humid, overcast afternoon in early summer. Susie, barefoot in a black cotton dress, is curled up on the couch, looking through a photo album. Earbuds in, she's listening to Joni Mitchell, and she mumble-sings along the way people do when they can't hear themselves. We hear (but Susie does not) a car pull up on a gravel driveway. Anna, sunglasses on, makes her entrance carrying canvas bags of groceries.*

ANNA. (*Entering.*) Darling, I can use a hand. (*Meaning: with the bags.*) Hello-o-o? (*Anna comes closer, startling Susie.*)

SUSIE. God, Granna, / you almost gave me a heart attack!

ANNA. How do you expect to *hear* anything, those stupid things / in your ears?

SUSIE. You could have at least made your presence known.

ANNA. I entered the room. I am not one whose entrances go unnoticed. Except, apparently, by my own granddaughter. Come here, you. (*Anna opens her arms to Susie, kisses the top of her head.*)

You look more and more like your mother.

SUSIE. I look *nothing* like my mother.

ANNA. I haven't seen you in ages.

SUSIE. You saw me spring break.

ANNA. Thank you so much for opening the house.

SUSIE. You're welcome.

ANNA. The very thought of walking into this empty house ...

SUSIE. I know.

ANNA. Something, isn't it? Rooms so alive with someone, once she's gone, all that's left is stuff. (*Susie brings the bags into the kitchen.*) When did you get here?

SUSIE. (*Exiting.*) Last night. One of my suitemates gave me a ride from New Haven.

ANNA. (*Calls.*) How can you wear black on a hot summer day? It makes me sweat to just look at you.

SUSIE. (*Offstage.*) That's a fallacy, you know.

ANNA. Who said? Black is a heat magnet. And it's depressing. (*Susie returns.*) I need you to run lines with me later.

SUSIE. Do I have to? I read horribly.

ANNA. You do not. You read wonderfully. (*Remembers to ask.*) Whose Porsche is sitting out there?

SUSIE. Dad's. Doesn't it just cry out "Male Menopause"?

ANNA. (*Lower voice.*) Is he here? (*Meaning: upstairs.*)

SUSIE. Went for a run.

ANNA. (*Surprised.*) Your father's running?

SUSIE. See: Porsche above.

ANNA. Did he bring the girlfriend?

SUSIE. Oh, yeah. What kind of man brings his girlfriend to his dead wife's family's house? And what kind of woman goes *with* him?

ANNA. What's she like?

SUSIE. (*Shrugs.*) Beautiful.



ANNA. And Elliot...?

SUSIE. Uncle Elliot is napping. Uncle Elliot naps.

ANNA. Your Uncle Elliot naps ... far too much. (*She picks up a discarded liquor bottle.*) What are you doing inside on such a gorgeous day?

SUSIE. Waiting for *you*.

ANNA. Well, go! Shoo! Shouldn't you be out having unprotected sex with people your own age?

SUSIE. I'm with people my own age all year long.

ANNA. So, what? It's summertime! You know, I just got a look at some of this year's apprentices. They're adorable.

SUSIE. They're *always* adorable.

ANNA. You should hang out with them.

SUSIE. Why? They're all actors.

ANNA. What's wrong with actors?

SUSIE. I hate actors.

ANNA. You do not hate actors. Your whole *family* is actors.

SUSIE. Exactly.

ANNA. Very funny. Speaking of actors ... guess who I just ran into at Wild Oats.

SUSIE. Who?

ANNA. Michael Astor.

SUSIE. (*Blushes.*) You're kidding. What was he doing there?

ANNA. He's doing a play / up here.

SUSIE. I know. What was he doing at Wild Oats?

ANNA. Shopping for food.

SUSIE. Michael shops for food? Doesn't he have like little assistants who run errands for him?

ANNA. Maybe in L.A. he does. He was by himself. Posing for people's iPhones.

SUSIE. *That* must've been a scene: Michael Astor in produce.

ANNA. I actually got a lot more looks than *he* did. I didn't recognize him right away; he's grown some sort of mustache.

SUSIE. Eew.

ANNA. He was supposed to move into his sublet today but there were bugs or something. They were going to put him in some *board* member's house — that awful woman with the high-decibel voice — I said absolutely not, he was staying *here*.

SUSIE. (*Distressed.*) Here?!

ANNA. For one or two nights.

SUSIE. One or *two*?

ANNA. Until they can fumigate his sublet.

SUSIE. How could you *do* this to me?!

ANNA. What am I doing to you? You *love* Michael.

SUSIE. I *do* love Michael. In theory. And on television. That doesn't mean I want him staying in our *house* ...

ANNA. I thought you'd be thrilled.

SUSIE. He's rich ... Couldn't he stay at a hotel? What about The Williams Inn?

ANNA. Michael Astor is not going to stay at The Williams Inn — not when he has *us*.

SUSIE. The least you could have done was *ask* me first.

ANNA. Excuse me? This is still *my* house, young lady. I thought it would be *festive* having him here.

SUSIE. "Festive"?!

ANNA. Given the circumstances, yes. He'll be a welcome distraction.

SUSIE. (*Vulnerably.*) But ... I thought this was going to be, you know: just us. Immediate family.

ANNA. Oh, honey.

SUSIE. We were going to keep it low-key, look through photo albums and stuff.

ANNA. We *are* keeping it low-key.

SUSIE. No, now thanks to you we have guests to entertain. Michael, Daddy's girlfriend ...

ANNA. Michael is hardly a guest who needs to be entertained. (*A car on gravel.*)

SUSIE. Oh my God!

ANNA. Stop being such a drama queen.

SUSIE. I come by it genetically. (*Car door slams.*) Wait. Where's he gonna sleep?

MICHAEL. (*Offstage.*) Hello?

SUSIE. Shit.

ANNA. (*Brightly.*) In here!  
(*Michael enters with a leather duffel and a bag with bottles of wine and flowers. He indeed sports a mustache. Susie, blushing at the sight of him, tries to be invisible.*)

MICHAEL. Anna.

ANNA. Michael. Welcome, darling. You remembered how to get here.

MICHAEL. Of course I remembered. These are for you. (*He kisses her cheek and presents her with the flowers.*)

ANNA. Aren't you sweet! Thank you! (*He sees Susie for the first time.*)

MICHAEL. That *can't* be little Susie ...  
ANNA. It certainly is ... SUSIE. (*Waves wanly.*) Hi, Michael.  
MICHAEL. The Susie *I* know is twelve years old. *Look* at you! Are you in college yet? / God, you must be.  
SUSIE. *Yes* I'm in college; I'm practically a college *graduate*.  
MICHAEL. *Now* I feel old. What are you majoring in?  
SUSIE. Religious studies and psych?  
MICHAEL. Interesting, coming from a family of heathen actors.  
SUSIE. It's called reaction formation.  
ANNA. Susie's the sane one. Always has been.  
MICHAEL. Never got the acting bug?  
SUSIE. You mean like scarlet fever? Or the plague?  
ANNA. Ha.  
SUSIE. Weren't you just in Africa?  
MICHAEL. How did *you* know?  
SUSIE. *People* magazine. It's not like it was a secret ...  
MICHAEL. Oh. Right.  
ANNA. Were you shooting a movie or something?  
MICHAEL. No no, I go a couple of times a year. To Congo, actually. We're building schools there.  
ANNA. Oh, *that's* right ...  
SUSIE. Isn't that awesome? You've been doing it for a while now, right?  
ANNA. Darling, why don't you see if Michael would like something to drink?  
SUSIE. Michael, would you like something to drink?  
MICHAEL. Why, yes, Susie, I would. (*He produces a bottle of Pellegrino from the bag.*) On ice? With lemon?  
SUSIE. We don't have lemon. (*He presents one from the bag. Anna hands her the flowers.*)  
ANNA. I'll have the same, dear. Thanks.  
SUSIE. Anything else? I'm like a little serf around here. All I need's a little babushka.  
ANNA. Shoo! (*She goes.*)  
MICHAEL. She's great.  
ANNA. Susie? She's a rock.  
MICHAEL. Elliot here?  
ANNA. Napping, apparently.  
MICHAEL. And Walter...?  
ANNA. Out running. *With* his new ladyfriend.

# THE COUNTRY HOUSE

by Donald Margulies

3M, 3W

A brood of famous and longing-to-be-famous creative artists have gathered at their summer home during the Williamstown Theatre Festival. When the weekend takes an unexpected turn, everyone is forced to improvise, inciting a series of simmering jealousies, romantic outbursts, and passionate soul-searching. Both witty and compelling, *THE COUNTRY HOUSE* provides a piercing look at a family of performers coming to terms with the roles they play in each other's lives.

*"THE COUNTRY HOUSE is one of the most satisfying new American plays to reach Broadway in the past decade. ... [A] truly affecting play."*

—**The Wall Street Journal**

*"Like Chekhov, Mr. Margulies is a specialist in rueful regrets and misty glimpses of roads not taken."*

—**The New York Times**

*"Margulies takes drama and intrigue to new heights. ... THE COUNTRY HOUSE gets us to think and feel and reconsider the conditions at hand. That's a feat that great plays like this one can achieve."*

—**The Huffington Post**

*"A valentine to the theater. ... There are laughs aplenty."*

—**Entertainment Weekly**

*"THE COUNTRY HOUSE takes its mother-son rift, its themes of art and ego and unrequited love, and even its bucolic setting from Anton Chekhov, but what it most has in common with its source material is an ability to scrupulously map all the craggy contours of the human heart."*

—**LA Weekly**

**Also by Donald Margulies**  
CONEY ISLAND CHRISTMAS  
DINNER WITH FRIENDS  
TIME STANDS STILL  
and others

**DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.**

ISBN: 978-0-8222-3274-2

