



STELLA AND LOU

BY BRUCE GRAHAM



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



STELLA AND LOU
Copyright © 2015, Bruce Graham

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of STELLA AND LOU 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 STELLA AND LOU 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 Bret Adams, Ltd., 448 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036. Attn: Alexis Williams.

SPECIAL NOTE

Anyone receiving permission to produce STELLA AND LOU 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 my sister, Bonnie.

*And with thanks to B.J. Jones and Tim Evans at Northlight,
and Paul Fahy at the Galway International Arts Festival.*

STELLA AND LOU was originally produced by Northlight Theatre (B.J. Jones, Artistic Director; Timothy J. Evans, Executive Director) in Chicago, Illinois, on May 3, 2013. It was directed by B.J. Jones; the set design was by Brian Sydney Bembridge; the costume design was by Rachel Laritz; the lighting design was by JR Lederle; the sound design was by Andrew Hansen; and the production stage manager was Rita Vreeland. The cast was as follows:

LOU Francis Guinan
STELLA..... Rhea Perlman
DONNIE Ed Flynn

The two-hander version of STELLA AND LOU was produced by Merrimack Repertory Theatre (Charles Towers, Artistic Director; Elizabeth Kegley, Executive Director) in Lowell, Massachusetts, on November 29, 2013. It was directed by Charles Towers; the set design was by Bill Clarke; the costume design was by A. Lee Viliesis; the lighting design was by Brian Lilienthal; the sound design was by Jason E. Weber; and the stage manager was Bree Sherry. The cast was as follows:

LOU Bill Geisslinger
STELLA.....Antoinette LaVecchia

This play was originally commissioned as the annual recipient of the Selma Melvoin Playwriting Award, administered by Northlight Theatre, Chicago, IL.

CHARACTERS

LOU

STELLA

DONNIE

PLACE

Lou's Bar in South Philadelphia.

TIME

Around eleven o'clock on a summer night.

STELLA AND LOU

Music. The kind you might hear in a funeral home.

Lights rise on Donnie, 30s. He wears a suit that fit him a few pounds ago; Donnie's a little overweight. He stands awkwardly, holding note cards. He is in a funeral home, speaking before a very small audience.

DONNIE. Okay, so ... uhh ... Lou asked me ta say a few words. Uhhh ... I don't know why he asked me. Thanks a lot, Lou. Only other time I hadda give a speech was at my brother's wedding. I did the toast. Screwed it up. Think that's the last time I wore this suit. Weddings and funerals, right? Only time I ever see my cousins. Weddings're more fun, I can tell ya that. Uhh ... well, I'm not sure what I'm s'posed to say here. We all knew him. Well, kinda knew him, I guess. He, uhh — *(A cell phone goes off.)* Who's got the phone on? Yo, Jimmy, turn it off, huh? Little respect. I don't care — call her back. *(Thrown, he looks down at his notes.)* He ... uhh ... he really liked baseball. Ya know, and — went to Saint Dominic's. Didn't graduate or anything — think he got thrown out — and ... he ... uhh ... he really ... liked baseball and — he wasn't a veteran or anything. Told me when he got drafted he stayed up for three days drinkin' coffee and his blood pressure was through the roof and they rejected him ... *(Thinks a moment.)* Which was ... a pretty rotten thing for him to do when ya think about it. *(He lets out a sigh, then looks out at his audience.)* Jesus, I got no idea what I'm s'posed ta say here. Tried to write some stuff down but I just ... *(Puts the cards down and looks out at his audience.)* Come on, let's face it. I mean, let's be honest here. Reilly was a total asshole. *(Lights fade. In the dark we hear the broadcast of a baseball game. Lights rise on Lou's Bar, a neighborhood corner spot in a very blue-collar neighborhood. Mementos everywhere: faded photos, sports memorabilia —*

stuff like that. There are a few tables scattered about, but this is mostly a “sit at the bar” kind of place. A door to the kitchen is stage left. The kitchen is partially seen through the service window behind the bar. The entrance to the bar is stage right. We see a small section of the sidewalk, bathed in streetlights. On the bar sits a large jar stuffed with dollar bills. There is a sign taped to it: “HELP BURY REILLY.” Next to it is a box that overflows with yellowed-with-age envelopes. They are addressed and stamped but clearly very old. A TV above the bar, facing upstage, broadcasts the ball game. An ancient air conditioner hummmms quietly in the background. Lou’s Bar is naturally dark. When someone opens the door during the day the sunlight is not welcome. Although worn down, the place looks relatively clean. Donnie, still in his suit, with the jacket draped across the stool, sits at the bar nursing a beer while microwaving popcorn. He looks more tired than drunk, but he’s a little of both. His cell phone, which is sitting on the bar, rings. He checks the caller ID, then puts it back down. It rings again. From the kitchen we hear Lou:)

LOU. (*Offstage.*) You gonna answer that?

DONNIE. No.

LOU. Then muffle it or somethin’, will ya?

DONNIE. (*Silences it then stares at the TV for a moment.*) Six bridesmaids, Lou.

LOU. You told me.

DONNIE. She’s gonna ask my sister. She hates my sister. Everybody hates my sister. She’s a bitch. But you know Donna, she wants ta be polite ...

LOU. I’m tellin’ ya, give her what she wants.

DONNIE. That means I gotta have six ... whatta ya call it — guys. I don’t know six guys who’ll kick out for a tux.

LOU. Will you quit bitchin’?

DONNIE. It was s’posed to be maid of honor and best man. Just four of us, right? Now we got enough for a pick-up game. (*Lou enters from the kitchen, drying his hands with a dish towel. He wears a suit without the jacket, which is hung nearby. Although the suit is probably fifteen years out of style, it looks new due to the fact that it has spent the majority of its existence in a plastic hanger-bag full of moth-balls. Lou is not a “suit guy.” His sleeves are rolled up at the moment and his tie is slightly askew. He wears a white bar apron around his waist. He’s been cleaning up in the kitchen.*) This ain’t cheap, Lou. I’m puttin’ down deposits cost more’n my first car. And she don’t want the Knightsa Columbus either. Country clubs.

LOU. (*Glances at his watch and then heads for the door.*) Aren't her parents s'posed to pay for it?

DONNIE. That ain't happenin'. They hate me.

LOU. (*Steps outside, glancing up and down the street.*) Come on, Donnie. How could they hate ya?

DONNIE. 'Cause we live together. Real Catholic. And they're always makin' cracks about my weight. You don't know 'em — whole family's a buncha toothpicks. They act like I'm gonna bust the furniture or somethin'. (*He watches as Lou steps back in.*) What're ya lookin' for?

LOU. Nothin'.

DONNIE. (*Concerned.*) You okay?

LOU. Yeah.

DONNIE. Look depressed.

LOU. I been at a funeral all day. Whatta ya want — couple a good jokes? (*Moves back to the bar.*)

DONNIE. And I never went ta college. She did, right? So they expected her ta bring home somebody — I don't know — doctor or somethin'. Not the cable guy. (*Pulls out the popcorn. Lou watches as he tries to open the very hot bag.*) Ow, ow, ow. (*He pulls it open too hard. Popcorn flies everywhere. Lou just sighs.*)

LOU. Why'nt ya go home, Donnie?

DONNIE. Sorry, Lou. It was hot.

LOU. What'd ya think — you were pullin' it outta the freezer?

DONNIE. I'll clean it up.

LOU. I got it. (*Heads into the kitchen.*) You been drinkin' since we got back. Go home.

DONNIE. I'll just get inna fight. (*He nibbles at some of the popcorn that landed on the bar.*)

LOU. (*Offstage.*) Then get it over with. Make up. Everything'll be fine tomorrow.

DONNIE. Gonna suck tomorrow. (*Lou reenters with a broom and dustpan. He will attempt to clean up the popcorn as he speaks.*)

LOU. She's a terrific girl.

DONNIE. Mosta the time, yeah. But this goddamned wedding, I'm tellin' ya, Lou. It's a year from now and we're not gonna make it, I swear.

LOU. This stuff is important to women.

DONNIE. Why?

LOU. How the hell should I know? I don't get it. You don't get it. But they do. So just do it. (*Donnie looks at the box of envelopes, then*

takes one out. Although stamped, the envelopes are not sealed and he opens it, taking out a child's birthday card from the 1960s.)

DONNIE. Kitchen still open? I'm starvin'.

LOU. Go home, Donnie.

DONNIE. You want some pizza? I could call down DeMarco's —

LOU. Gimme a break, will ya? Long day.

DONNIE. She wants me to lose weight. For the wedding.

LOU. Wouldn't hurt ya to drop a couple.

DONNIE. She's been doin' this Pilates thing. She looks great.

LOU. Pilates?

DONNIE. She looks hot, Lou.

LOU. What's Pilates?

DONNIE. This stomach thing. New place onna corner.

LOU. Thought that was a restaurant. *(He notices the birthday card. A beat, then Donnie puts it back.)*

DONNIE. So whatta ya gonna do with 'em?

LOU. I ... don't know.

DONNIE. Just throw it out — *(The bar phone rings; Donnie freezes.)*

Tell her I'm not here.

LOU. I'm not lyin' —

DONNIE. I don't wanta deal with it —

LOU. Too bad. I'm not lyin' — *(The phone rings again; Donnie scurries to the front door.)*

DONNIE. Go ahead.

LOU. *(Into phone.)* Lou's. Hey, how ya doin', Donna? *(Donnie immediately steps outside. He remains right next to the door, trying to listen. Lou sighs.)* Nahh ... he just ... stepped out. No idea. Okay, but I'm closin' up soon so — *(Glancing at the box.)* It went ... okay. Nahh, he's fine, just ... kind of a depressin' day. I know he's been actin' like a nut all week but he's fine. Quit worryin', okay? G'night, Donna. *(Hangs up, then stands for a moment — thinking — before heading to the front door and opening it.)* Don't ever do that again. *(Donnie steps in. Lou steps out to the sidewalk, glancing up and down the street like he did before.)*

DONNIE. Did I tell ya about the dress? Know how much it costs?

LOU. *(Stepping back in.)* Give it a rest.

DONNIE. She's gonna wear it once, Lou.

LOU. Donnie, go home. She's worried about ya. *(Picks up a remote and turns off the TV.)*

DONNIE. How many'd you have at your wedding?

LOU. I can't remember back that far.

DONNIE. Come on, Lou, serious — ballpark figure. I mean, did you have it at the church or did ya —

LOU. (*Sharp.*) Donnie. Drop it. (*Donnie takes the hint. Lou immediately regrets his tone and softens.*) Come on. Late, huh? She's worried. (*He begins to sweep up.*)

DONNIE. What's she all worried about?

LOU. You been actin' like some kinda depressed jackass all week. She's afraid you're gonna throw yourself in front of a bus or somethin'.

DONNIE. (*A catch in his voice.*) It was my fault, Lou.

LOU. It was nobody's fault. It just happened, okay?

DONNIE. (*Unconvinced.*) Yeah, okay. (*Lou stops sweeping. He flexes his right hand as if in pain.*) Still hurt?

LOU. I'm fine.

DONNIE. Lemme sweep.

LOU. No offense, Donnie, but I've seen how ya sweep. (*Donnie's phone rings.*) Talk to her or you are bounced.

DONNIE. Come on, Lou —

LOU. I'll eighty-six your ass and you'll have to drink at the Shamrock. You wanta drink at the Shamrock, huh Donnie? You wanta hang at the Shamrock? (*This is clearly a terrible fate. He hands Donnie the phone.*)

DONNIE. Christ, no. I'll answer. Jeezus. (*Answers as Lou goes back to sweeping. Into phone.*) Hey, Donna. I'm fine, I just — I had my phone turned off. 'Cause I was at a funeral, why ya think? Jimmy forgot. His went off in the middle'a my eulogy thing. (*Lou motions for him to get off the stool so he can sweep.*) Why ya callin' all day? You think of somethin' else ta buy for this stupid wedding?

LOU. Watch it, Donnie.

DONNIE. Quit worryin'. I'm not jumpin' in fronta any busses. I'm fine, I'm hardly even drunk so quit callin' will ya. (*Lou turns to sweep. Again, Donnie's in the way.*)

LOU. Take it outside. (*As they speak Stella, 50s, enters from around the building. Stella wears a very attractive summer dress. She stands there a moment, as if debating whether or not to go in.*)

DONNIE. (*Off phone.*) Too hot. (*Still talking, he heads to the men's room.*) What — I gotta leash alla sudden? I'll be home when I'm home. (*Exits into the men's room. Lou empties the dustpan in the trash can. Stella pulls out a compact and does a quick check of her hair and makeup. Lou uses the remote to turn off the air conditioner. The bar is silent. He stands a moment, then takes one more look at the box*)

STELLA AND LOU

by Bruce Graham

On a quiet night at Lou's Bar, two kindred spirits seek solace as they navigate changing times and relationships past. From the author of *THE OUTGOING TIDE* comes an intimate exploration of friendship, forgiveness, and the longing for companionship that grows with the passage of time.

This volume contains both the original three-hander (2M, 1W) and a two-hander (1M, 1W) alternative version.

"STELLA AND LOU is a play about late-in-life loneliness (and depression), themes that are not often explored in the theater, for all of their ubiquity. ... Refreshing ... Potentially devastating, mostly because it feels so very familiar."

—**Chicago Tribune**

"In this and his other plays, Bruce Graham demonstrates a rare talent for writing older than his own experience."

—**WindyCityTimes.com**

Also by Bruce Graham
ANY GIVEN MONDAY
DESPERATE AFFECTION
THE OUTGOING TIDE
and others

DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

ISBN: 978-0-8222-3318-3



9 780822 233183