

HILLARY AND CLINTON

BY
LUCAS HNATH

★ Broadway Edition

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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

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The original Broadway production of HILLARY AND CLINTON was produced by Scott Rudin, Eli Bush, Bob Boyett, Tom Miller, Len Blavatnik, True Love Productions, and Adam Rodner; the executive producers were Joe Parnes, Sue Wagner, and John Johnson. It opened in April 2019 at the John Golden Theatre. It was directed by Joe Mantello, the scenic design was by Chloe Lamford, the costume design was by Rita Ryack, the lighting design was by Hugh Vanstone, the sound design was by Leon Rothenberg, the production dramaturg was Sarah Lunnie, and the production stage manager was James FitzSimmons. The cast was as follows:

HILLARY Laurie Metcalf
BILL John Lithgow
MARK Zak Orth
BARACK Peter Francis James

The world premiere of HILLARY AND CLINTON was produced by Victory Gardens Theater (Chay Yew, Artistic Director; Chris Mannelli, Managing Director) in Chicago, Illinois, in April 2016. It was directed by Chay Yew, the set design was by William Boles, the costume design was by Janice Pytel, the sound design was by Rick Sims, the dramaturg was Isaac Gomez, and the production stage manager was Jinni Pike. The cast was as follows:

HILLARY Cheryl Lynn Bruce
BILL John Apicella
MARK Keith Kupferer
THE OTHER GUY Juan Francisco Villa

HILLARY AND CLINTON was developed by the Cape Cod Theatre Project (Hal Brooks, Artistic Director).

SPECIAL THANKS

Sarah Lunnie, Adam Greenfield, Linsay Firman,

Chay Yew, Ken Rus Schmoll,

Isaac Gomez, Carrie Chapter, Brey Ann Barrett,

Edith Freni, Hal Brooks, Val Day, Sara Garonzik,

Amy Staats, Robert O’Gorman, David Ross, Rachel Botchan, K.

Todd Freeman, Liam Craig, Matt Saldivar, Cheryl Lynn Bruce,

John Apicella, Keith Kupferer, Juan Villa, Alice Gatling, John

Procaccino, Todd Cerveris, Lindsay Smiling.

Derek Zasky, Scott Rudin, Joe Mantello,

Joey Parnes, Sue Wagner, John Johnson, Ed Wasserman,

Laurie Metcalf, John Lithgow, Zak Orth, Peter Francis James.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

2008

It might be tempting, very tempting, to play these characters as imitations of the real deal. An actor playing Bill Clinton might be very tempted to mimic Bill's signature southern drawl and lip bites just as an actor playing Hillary might want to emulate her cadences and laugh. Don't do it! Do not play for easy recognition. Don't imitate. Don't even try to cast actors who look like these people.

Instead, imagine that the audience watching this play has never heard of the Clintons and that this is an opportunity to create these characters anew. An audience watching Shakespeare's *Henry V* has no reference point for the real Hal, nor does the actor have much of a reference point for what Hal looked like or sounded like, and therefore those performers interpreting those roles must invent the sound and look and gestural language of the characters, and they must base their interpretations entirely on the text and its dramatic requirements.

Treat this play in the same way. Play the text and not the persona that exists outside of the text so that you might elevate these characters beyond a facile tabloid reality.

2016

I wrote *Hillary and Clinton* in 2008. It did not receive its first production until the spring of 2016. We were rehearsing the play while the primaries were in full swing. It was an especially volatile campaign season. Once audiences started showing up, their response reflected that volatility. Audiences wanted the play to comment on what was happening in the current news cycle. Even though the play had nothing to say to those current events—at least not in a direct or obvious way—you could sense the audience seeking some explicit commentary. Many audience members would snicker at perceived points of easy recognition.

It became more necessary than ever to remind ourselves of the 2008

performance note. The production and actors needed to avoid ever indulging or playing into those audience snickers. Otherwise, the larger ideas that the play is trying to communicate about gender, power, civics, legacy, and public image would become even harder to hear.

I suspect that productions staged at a time when we're not wondering whether or not Hillary Clinton will become president will not have to wrestle as much with an audience expectation of commentary on the day's news. Since she lost her 2016 bid for the White House, there is now a bit more room to take a larger step and reflect on what her runs for the presidency mean. And yet, that space for reflection evaporates if the tone of the production leans towards satire or parody. Tread carefully.

2019

At the end of 2017 producer Scott Rudin called me to his office to tell me that he wanted to produce *Hillary and Clinton*. Nearly ten years after I had finished the first draft, I felt very far from the writer who wrote the play back then, and I also wasn't entirely sure that I stood by what I had previously written. In 2017 the play felt too whimsical, and I felt that we needed a tougher assessment of the characters and the situation.

So, in the summer of 2018, I opened a blank document. Having not looked at the play since it was last produced in 2016, I wrote the entire thing from memory, giving myself permission to depart from what I had originally imagined if I had a new idea. I finished this new version of the play at the end of the summer, and pretty soon after we went into production during which I continued to iterate on the play.

Taking a step back, I look now at all of the *Hillary and Clintons* I've written. Some are very slightly different. Others more so. Each one of them is interesting to me in different ways. Ten years from now—who knows—I may write another *Hillary and Clinton*. If the universe is infinite...

CHARACTERS

HILLARY

a woman running for president of the United States

BILL

a man who was once president of the United States,
married to Hillary

MARK

a political strategist

BARACK

a man who is also running for president of the United States

WHEN & WHERE

Sunday, January 6, 2008, morning, New Hampshire;

also very late at night and into the next A.M.;

Tuesday, January 8, 2008, early evening;

also late at night, also New Hampshire

SCRIPT GRAMMAR

Dashes

When dashes join together sentence fragments...

And I think we can all agree that if I were to flip it another five times it would be pretty unlikely that I'd get that same exact—heads heads heads tails heads...

do not pause on the dash, rather move through it without breath.

Dashes also end lines. This means that the line is being cut off by the next.

Ellipses

A pause, dead stop.

BILL.
I just like being useful.

HILLARY.

...

BILL.
—had some stomach stuff,
while I was overseas, had some—
problems with my stomach
terrible stomach pains

Sometimes a look, sometimes shared between characters. Allow these pauses to be quite still, awkward if necessary.

Pace

In general, let the lines roll continuously forward, taking out the air wherever possible, especially where lines end without punctuation.

HILLARY AND CLINTON

A hotel room. A bed. Chairs. At least two doors—one leading to the outside, another leading to another room. The set wants to feel incomplete—like a rehearsal set.

An Actress walks out onto the stage. The house lights remain at full. She holds up a coin.

ACTRESS.

This is a coin. And
it has a president on one side and—
I don't know what on the other.

Now if I were to take this coin and flip it, say, five times,
I might get something like heads heads heads tails heads—right?

And I think we can all agree that if I were to flip it another five times
it would be pretty unlikely that I'd get that same exact—heads heads
heads tails heads...

But if I were to flip it a hundred times, then sure, I would probably
get that same order of flips once, probably even more than once—
BUT if I were to flip this coin an *infinite* number of times—well then
I'd get that same sequence over and over and over and over...

So what people can take from that
is that if um the universe is infinite—and some people say it is—
then that means that everything that happens in it
happens many times, over and over,
and *that* that means there are an
infinite number of Planet Earths—all kinds of Planets Earths—
Planet Earths like this one and
Planet Earths that are nothing like this one,
and Planet Earths that are like this one but slightly different, and on
and on and—

So, then imagine, okay, that

light years away from here
on one of those other Planet Earths
that's like this one but *slightly* different
that there's a woman
named Hillary.

And this woman Hillary
is trying to become president of a country called
the United States of America.

And Hillary—she has a husband named Bill.
And Bill was once himself president.

And imagine it's Sunday, and the month is January,
and the year is 2008 on this other Planet Earth—
and this is supposed to be a hotel room.

And now imagine that I'm that woman named Hillary
who lives far away from here
and who is trying to become president of the United States of—and
I've been campaigning
for close to a year now.
I haven't slept.
I'm tired.
I'm very tired.

I have a long day ahead of me.
Events and speeches.
And the state of New Hampshire will vote on Tuesday,
in something called a primary.

(Enter Mark.)

And that's Mark—he helps run the campaign.

And every time I turn on the television,
there's someone on it saying that I'm going to lose,
and I change the channel and there's another one.
And I look at the numbers
and I look at the polls
and I look at what they're saying in the papers
and everyone says that I'm going to lose,

I'm going to lose.

And I think,
I'm going to lose

MARK.
well, yes, the numbers aren't good, but—

HILLARY.
they're abysmal

MARK.
you're still second

HILLARY.
second isn't first

MARK.
it's not third

HILLARY.
yeah but in Iowa I was third—
you thought I'd win Iowa

MARK.
I thought there was a chance that maybe you could win Iowa, but—

HILLARY.
I'm worried.

MARK.
You lost Iowa, and yes,
yes, you *could* lose New Hampshire,
but we have a lot of states we know you're going to win.
You're going to be fine—this isn't the first time I've done this

HILLARY.
me neither

MARK.
exactly

HILLARY.
right.

MARK.
I'd actually be more worried if we were winning too fast—
if right out of the gate—we were at the top,
because when that happens people start to
look for someone to upset the race.
As far as I'm concerned it's good for you to be the underdog

HILLARY.
so me losing is a strategy?

MARK.
...

HILLARY.
I wanna talk about money.

MARK.
In what sense—?

HILLARY.
in the sense that we don't have any,
in the sense that *because* we're losing
no wants to give us—

MARK.
well look: we poll well with the poor but the poor don't have money.
The other guy polls well with the rich and so he gets the money.

HILLARY.
We *were* polling well with the rich

MARK.
and we will again

HILLARY.
not if we keep losing, the rich don't like people with the loser look
and I've got—

MARK.
I think you can still win this state

HILLARY.
I intend to win this state,
but clearly I am not winning this state.
And if I don't win, then we're out of money,
and if we're out of money—that's it.
This is over.

MARK.
Pessimism is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

HILLARY.
Then give me something to be optimistic about.

MARK.
He's panicking.

HILLARY.
Who.

MARK.
Barack.

HILLARY.
No he's not

MARK.
Yes, he is—

HILLARY AND CLINTON

by Lucas Hnath

3 men, 1 woman

In an alternate universe light-years away from our own is a planet called Earth. It looks a lot like our Earth, except it's slightly different. And living on this other Earth is a woman named Hillary. Hillary is trying to become the president of a country called the United States of America. It's 2008 and she's campaigning in a state called New Hampshire. She's not doing very well in the polls. She needs more money to keep the campaign going, so she calls her husband for help. He offers her a deal, a tough deal, but when she gets his help, she gets more than she bargained for. You may think you know where this story is going, but you don't. After all, the play takes place in an alternate universe where anything can happen.

"...HILLARY AND CLINTON is an audacious, whip-smart, highly entertaining piece of writing, all the more valuable for its appearance in the middle of another primary battle, albeit in an America changed for the good... [the play] also has a political immediacy generally lacking in the theater, where plays get locked and set much too far in advance, and where some deep diving into the ideology or emotion of the moment thus becomes all too rare."

—Chicago Tribune

"Mr. Hnath's play is a Machiavellian meditation on the sacrifices politicians will make to reach office."

—The Economist

Also by Lucas Hnath

THE CHRISTIANS

A DOLL'S HOUSE, PART 2

ISAAC'S EYE

and others

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