



# HILLARY AND CLINTON

BY  
LUCAS HNATH



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
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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 designer was William Boles, the costume designer was Janice Pytel, the sound designer was 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).

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Cheryl Lynn Bruce, John Apicella, Keith Kupferer, Juan Villa,  
Alice Gatling, John Procaccino, Todd Cerveris, Lindsay Smiling.

## PERFORMANCE 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.

## PERFORMANCE NOTES: 2017

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.

## **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

THE OTHER GUY

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

## **PLACE & TIME**

ACT ONE

January 6, 2008, 10 A.M., New Hampshire

January 7, 2008, late at night, New Hampshire

ACT TWO

January 8, 2008, early evening, also late at night,  
also New Hampshire

*“There’s an old saying: Bloom where you’re planted.”*

—Hillary Clinton



# HILLARY AND CLINTON

## ACT ONE

*A hotel room. A bed. Chairs. Two doors—one to a bathroom, the other to the outside. The set should feel incomplete—a rehearsal set.*

*An Actress walks out onto the stage. The house lights remain at full.*

ACTRESS.

If I flipped this quarter five times,  
I might get a heads  
and a heads,  
then tails,  
then heads,  
and another heads.

If I were to flip it another five times  
it's very unlikely that I would get  
the same exact sequence.

If I were to flip it 100 times, it seems possible  
that I might get the same sequence,  
or at least something close.

And if I were to flip it, an *infinite* number of times,  
then it's inevitable  
that I would get the same sequence  
many times  
over  
and over  
and over again.

Some say that if space is infinite,  
then it follows that there must be an infinite number of planet Earths  
exactly like our planet Earth  
inhabited by people who look and act exactly like us  
who do exactly what we do  
and have our same names.

And that there are also  
an infinite number of planet Earths  
very much like our own, but *slightly* different.  
And there are even more that are nothing like our planet Earth.

It would be very helpful if  
—as you watch this play—  
you were to imagine that the play  
takes place on one of those slightly different planet earths  
located billions of light years away from our own.

*(House lights begin to dim.)*

And to imagine that on this planet Earth  
light years away from our planet Earth  
is a woman named Hillary.

And to imagine it's a Sunday. January 6th, 2008.  
And to imagine, this woman Hillary  
is trying to become president of a country called  
the United States of America.

And Hillary has a husband named Bill.  
And Bill was once himself president of the United States of America.

And imagine that in the country called the United States of America  
is a state called New Hampshire.

And New Hampshire has its own election.  
And this election will help determine which person might get a  
chance to try to become president.

This is a hotel room.

There's a bed.

Through the doorway, a bathroom.

And now imagine...that *I'm* that woman named Hillary  
who lives far away from here,  
and that *I'm* that woman who's trying to become president of the  
United States of America

I've been campaigning for close to a year now.  
I haven't slept.  
I'm tired.  
I'm very tired.

It's Sunday.  
I have a long day ahead of me.  
Town halls and speeches.  
And the state of New Hampshire will vote on Tuesday.

I sit in front of the TV.  
I flip channels and there's a guy saying that I'm going to lose,  
and I flip again and there's another one.  
And I look at the numbers  
and I look at the polls  
and I look at the editorials 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.

And I think,  
I've got to stop watching TV.

And I think

all this money I've spent  
and all this time I've spent  
and everything I gave up to get to here  
only to get nothing.

*(Enter Mark.)*

MARK. *(To Hillary.)*

Here's the deal.

ACTRESS/HILLARY. *(Still to audience.)*

This is Mark. He's my political strategist. He sweats a lot.

MARK.

Pull out now,  
the other guy will give you VP.  
Guaranteed.

HILLARY.

That's *if* he wins.

MARK.

If he wins.

HILLARY.

What if I win?

MARK.

Well you wouldn't. If you pulled out.

HILLARY.

Exactly.

MARK.

...

HILLARY.

I intend to win.

MARK.  
I understand.

HILLARY.  
My answer is no.

MARK.  
It's a one-time offer.

HILLARY.  
I know.  
I'm not interested.  
I don't understand why you're

MARK.  
I felt it was my job to let you know what's going on.

HILLARY.  
You can call him back and tell him the answer is no.

MARK.  
Okay. I will.

HILLARY.  
...

MARK.  
...

HILLARY.  
...

MARK.  
But can we maybe just go over the numbers?

HILLARY.  
I know the numbers.

# HILLARY AND CLINTON

by Lucas Hnath

3M, 1W

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 Iowa. 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**  
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