

13 THINGS ABOUT ED CARPOLOTTI

BOOK, MUSIC, AND LYRICS BY
BARRY KLEINBORT

BASED ON THE PLAY BY
JEFFREY HATCHER



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

13 THINGS ABOUT ED CARPOLOTTI
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*To the remarkable Penny Fuller,
a consummate actress and tireless muse ...
with deep admiration and gratitude.*

13 THINGS ABOUT ED CARPOLOTTI was first presented at 59E59 Theaters in New York City, New York under the producing auspices of the Acting Company, Harbinger Records, and Jamie deRoy, on December 4, 2012. It was directed by Barry Kleinbort, the set design was by Alexander Woodbridge, the lighting design was by Matt Berman, the sound design was by Brad Berridge, and the musical director was Paul Greenwood. The cast was Penny Fuller as Virginia Carpolotti and Paul Greenwood as the Pianist.

13 THINGS ABOUT ED CARPOLOTTI made its regional theater premiere at the Merrimack Repertory Theatre (Charles Towers, Artistic Director) in Lowell, Massachusetts, on November 28, 2014. It was directed by Barry Kleinbort, the set design was by Bill Clarke, the lighting design was by Brian J. Lillienthal, the sound design was by Edrick Smith, and the musical director was Paul Greenwood. The cast was Penny Fuller as Virginia Carpolotti and Paul Greenwood as the Pianist.

13 THINGS ABOUT ED CARPOLOTTI was originally developed at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center Cabaret and Performance Conference.

CHARACTERS

VIRGINIA CARPOLOTTI

THE PIANIST

13 THINGS ABOUT ED CARPOLOTTI

The stage is in darkness. Piano music begins ... lights slowly revealing the Pianist, wearing a full dress tuxedo with white tie and tails. After he plays a short musical introduction, lights come up around him, on a living room in an upscale suburban section of a major town somewhere in the Northeast. Virginia, a handsome woman in her late 50s – early 60s, is standing in the middle of the room, a long, faded manila envelope in her hand. On one side of the stage there are two suitcases (with a jacket draped over them) ready for travel. Among the furnishings in the room are an ornate easy chair, a side table, and a baby grand piano with the Pianist seated at it. Even though the audience sees him and hears him, he is only in Virginia's imagination. Virginia looks off in the direction of the front door, then at the envelope in her hand, unsure whether to open it or not. Nervously, she begins to hum, while heading for the table to retrieve her reading glasses. Only, they're not there. She checks on top of the piano. No luck. She checks inside the cushions of the easy chair. Nope. She gets on her knees to search underneath the chair's legs. Nothing. Her humming grows more desperate, even segueing into a familiar strain from Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2. In despair, she grabs the top of her head with her hands. And immediately feels her glasses, which were there on the top of her head. She takes them off ... puts them on to read ... starts to open the envelope ... and then she stops.

VIRGINIA. I always hum when I'm nervous. In *The King and I*, whenever she was nervous, Deborah Kerr would "whistle a happy tune" ... Well, me, I hum happy tunes. Sad ones, too ... I'll stay all night and hum 'em all. Sometimes I'll even start to make up tunes. What can I say? It helps me cope. (*She puts the envelope down. She hums a little.*) Before humming, when I was nervous, I talked. A lot. Mostly to myself. An only child will do that. I still talk to myself sometimes. (*A sudden realization.*) Like right now.

"Hello, Virginia."

"Hello."

“How are you?”

“Nervous.”

“Well, why don’t you just shut up and hum.” (*She hums a little more, then stops.*)

I think I actually started humming because of Ed. He always said I couldn’t keep my mouth shut. Well, he didn’t *always* say it. I think he said it once. He certainly wasn’t a hummer ... or, for that matter, much of a talker. Even *before* we were married. He’d clam up at dinners ... parties ... He knew I hated him being so quiet. I’d say to him, “Ed, at least *look* like you’re talking to me!” So, he tried. Whenever he didn’t have anything to say, he’d turn to me and start to mutter ... “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” he’d say. And I’d come back, “His fleece was white as snow.” “And everywhere that Mary went ... ” And so on and so on. People thought we had quite a rapport. (*Virginia hums again. She takes the glasses off and notices an old flip-top lighter that probably belonged to Ed on the table. She picks it up, clicks it open and closed a few times.*) Ed gave up smoking four months before he died ... We’d moved him to Allegheny General in Pittsburgh when things started to go haywire. Our hospital, St. Joseph’s, isn’t equipped for that kind of thing ... By which I mean decent hospital care when your life depends on it. We moved Ed during a rebroadcast of *A Walton Thanksgiving* ... Debbie made all of the arrangements ... and, as she did, went on and on about this being 1996 and St. Joseph’s was some obsolete asylum from an earlier century. Something about it being “too Dickensian for words.” (*Virginia looks out front.*) I never know what Debbie’s talking about. (*She starts to hum. The Pianist picks up her tune. Virginia sings.*)

ED GAVE UP SMOKING LABOR DAY
TOSSED OUT A HALF-FULL PACK
THEN, TEN A.M. ON HALLOWEEN
HE HAD HIS FIRST ATTACK
THANKSGIVING BROUGHT THE SECOND ONE
WHILE SERVING THE “OCEAN SPRAY” ...
ED GOT A SHORT REPRIEVE ...
LASTED TILL CHRISTMAS EVE ...
AND THEN, AROUND DAWN,
HE WAS GONE
ON CHRISTMAS DAY ...

Well, he loved the holidays. (*Music continues to underscore.*) When we brought him back to the funeral home, the undertaker’s assistant asked us if there was anything else they could do to make Ed look more natural? (*She sings.*)

I SAID,

“YEAH. GIVE ’IM A GODDAMN CIGARETTE.”

After the funeral, Debbie told me she’d slipped a pack of Camels into her father’s pocket before they closed the casket — “Sort of as a symbol, like the Egyptians or

the Vikings taking a talisman into the great beyond.” (*She looks out again.*) I never know what she’s talking about. (*She sings.*)

DEBBIE IS HOME IN APPLETON
LIVING WITH HUSBAND TWO
HE’S AN ASSISTANT PROVOST THERE ...
DOING WHAT ASSISTANT PROVOSTS DO ...
THEY’RE RAISING TWINS ... A FEISTY PAIR ...
YOU OUGHTA HEAR THE NOISE ...
DEBBIE JUST WROTE A PLAY
IT’S A ROMAN À CLEF
ABOUT A WOMAN WHO LIVES IN APPLETON
WITH HER SECOND HUSBAND,
THE ASSISTANT PROVOST,
AND A PAIR OF LOUD TWIN BOYS ...

I thought about calling her after the funeral when all the funny things started to happen, but she told me she’s struggling with her “denouement” and I didn’t want to interrupt. (*The music softens to a gentler figure.*)

Since the funeral, I’ve been thinking a lot about Ed and our life together ... Images come and go as rapidly as if I was channel surfing on the old Zenith in the den ... our wedding day ... the birth of Debbie ... summers at Eagle Lake ...

WHERE DID WE MEET?
WHERE WAS OUR FIRST HELLO?
YOU’D THINK THAT I STILL WOULD KNOW
BUT I CAN’T RECALL ...
WAS IT SPRING OR FALL?
PERHAPS, ON A STREET ...
OR AT A PICTURE SHOW ...
IT SHOULDN’T MATTER
I SHOULDN’T CARE
IT ONLY MATTERS
THAT HE WAS THERE
AND FROM THAT DAY ON ...
EVERYTHING WAS NEW ...
I RECALL THE WAY HIS TOUCH
COULD MAKE MY HEART JUST SING ...
I RECALL IT ALL
BUT FOR ONE SMALL
THING ...

(*The music continues.*) Tootie Vaughn would remember. Tootie’s my best girlfriend, and she remembers things like that. But I don’t ... All I remember was living at

home with Mother and Daddy and then ... there was Ed. He'd left his dad's grocery store and was going to build highways and roads and bridges. He had no money and no prospects and Mother and Daddy did not approve. I had to sneak out of the house to see him once. Mother and Daddy thought I'd gone with Tootie to see Martin and Lewis in *My Friend Irma Goes West* at the Liberty Theater, but I'd gone out to Stone Road with Ed. When I got back, Tootie was in our living room with a guilty look on her face, and Daddy quizzed me about my whereabouts that night. I began to hum. (*Virginia starts to hum.*)

Daddy said, "Virginia, quit stalling and tell me where you've been."

I said, "At the Liberty ... with Martin and Lewis."

Daddy said, "Prove it." (*The music stops.*)

Well, I had seen *My Friend Irma*, the picture with the same cast that had come out a couple of years earlier ... And I got roped into going back then because Tootie said I looked a little like Irma, who was played by Marie Wilson ... a perky, shapely, dim-witted blonde who'd say things like, "I miss my mother and father ... they were just like parents to me." Anyhow, I walked to the center of the living room ... cleared my throat, and then announced the title just like it was the opening credits of the movie ... (*She sings.*)

MY FRIEND IRMA GOES WEST

(*Spoken over music.*) And then ... what next...? Beats me ... hadn't a clue ...

DAD LOOKS AT ME

CLEARLY DREADING EACH WORD I'LL SAY

MOM LOOKS AT ME

LIKE I'M WEARING A SCARLET "A"

AND THEN THERE'S TOOTIE

WHO SHAKES HER HEAD

SHE THINKS I SHOULDA CONFESSED ...

I START AGAIN,

MY FRIEND IRMA GOES WEST

AND THEN I SMILE ...

'CAUSE I'M PICTURING ED 'N' ME ...

STILL MAKING LOVE

ON THE LONE PRAIRIE ...

WE'RE IN HIS FORD

AND WE'RE SNUDDLING,

WHEN HE SAYS, "I LOVE YOU SO ... "

I WAS REALLY GLAD I MISSED THE SHOW ...

THEN, DADDY SAYS,
“HONEY, TELL ME ...
I PROMISE YOU THINGS’LL BE ALL RIGHT”
AND MOMMY SAYS
“BABY, TELL HIM ...
DON’T LIE TO YOUR FATHER!”
AND TOOTIE SAYS,
“TELL THEM! OH, PLEASE!”
BUT, HONESTLY, IF I SQUEALED ABOUT ED, I KNEW
HE AND I WERE JUST AS GOOD AS THROUGH ...

(Spoken.) So, it’s back to the movie.

I SPIN A PLOT,
IMPROVISING AS BEST I CAN
I HAVE THE CAST ENTERTAINING A WEALTHY MAN
HE SAYS THEY’LL WORK FOR HIM IN L.A.
BUT WHILE THEY’RE RIDING THE TRAIN
THEY FIND OUT HE’S INSANE ...

DAD STARTS TO LAUGH
AND HE SAYS TO ME, “WHAT COMES NEXT?”
MOM LOOKS AT HIM
LIKE HE’S LOST HIS MARBLES ...
AND BY THEIR SIDE,
THERE IS TOOTIE
WHO LOOKS LIKE SHE REGRETS
SHE TOL’ ...
BY NOW MY FEARS ARE GONE,
I’M ON A ROLL ...

(Spoken.) I talk about Martin and Lewis and about how funny Jerry Lewis is with his scratchy sort of voice ...

HE ALWAYS CRIES, “LADY! LADY!”
“LADY! LADY!”

WHILE JERRY PLAYS THE FILM’S BUFFOON,
DEAN MARTIN GETS TO SMOOTHLY CROON ...
“BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH ... ”
“BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH ... ”

(She begins alternating between the two, “doing” both Martin and Lewis.)

“LADY, LADY ... ”
“BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH-BUH ... ”

13 THINGS ABOUT ED CARPOLOTTI

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based on the play by Jeffrey Hatcher

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Virginia Carpolotti is a devoted widow with loving memories of her recently-deceased husband. Though her love endures, her confidence in him flounders as one shady character after another comes calling for the debt that Ed put in her name, and things really heat up when a mysterious blackmail letter appears.

“The music is melodic, and the lyrics are clever and often poignant, deepening the book’s insights ... ”

—**The New York Times**

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