



FOREVER

BY DAEL ORLANDERSMITH



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and to the countless people I've come across who've helped
in so many ways

Victor Cobos for telling me every night before going onstage
“TELL IT GIRL!”

and to my ancestors both familial and artistic, I stand on your
shoulders ...

and
most importantly to the memory of my mother

Beula C Smith Brown — I hope wherever you are / you're smiling

FOREVER was originally commissioned and produced by Center Theatre Group at the Kirk Douglas Theatre (Michael Ritchie, Artistic Director), in Los Angeles, CA, opening on October 12, 2014. It was directed by Neel Keller; the set design was by Takeshi Kata; the costume design was by Kaye Voyce; the lighting design was by Mary Louise Geiger; the sound design was by Adam Phalen; and the stage manager was Young Ji. It was performed by Dael Orlandersmith.

FOREVER was subsequently produced by Long Wharf Theatre (Gordon Edelstein, Artistic Director; Joshua Borenstein, Managing Director), on January 2, 2015. It was directed by Neel Keller; the set design was by Takeshi Kata; the costume design was by Kaye Voyce; the lighting design was by Mary Louise Geiger; the sound design was by Adam Phalen; the dramaturg was Joy Meads; and the production stage manager was Lloyd Davis, Jr. It was performed by Dael Orlandersmith.

FOREVER was first produced in New York City by New York Theater Workshop (Jim Nicola, Artistic Director; Jeremy Blocker, Managing Director), opening on May 4, 2015. It was directed by Neel Keller; the set design was by Takeshi Kata; the costume design was by Kaye Voyce; the lighting design was by Mary Louise Geiger; the sound design was by Adam Phalen; and the stage manager was Sunneva Stapleton. It was performed by Dael Orlandersmith.

FOREVER

*Lights come up. Character enters. Perhaps arranges photos on a table. There could be strains of Marianne Faithfull's "Ghost Dance" playing in background.**

Welcome

I am glad you're here / time to summon ghosts / time to give some voice / to make some sense / time to take a ride / let's take a ride
(Lights candle. Maybe puts on record here. Crosses downstage.)

As a child I dreamt

I dreamt of a city

A city of light

I'm Here

I got myself — Here

Paris

I am here in Père Lachaise / first time in Père Lachaise Cemetery

Paying homage to great people

And

Those people are Here but no longer here / BUT they are Here

(She points.)

In that direction there is Balzac and *(Points in another direction.)*

Modigliani is there *(Points in another direction.)* and if you keep walking you will come across Piaf

Piaf

(Beat.)

I am in this place where greatness lives / rests / but still lives

I am seeking these people / these living resting people

These people who are really my family / who I really WANT to be my family

I'm thinking of Carol Cutrere in *Orpheus Descending* saying to Val

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

Xavier while in the graveyard, “Do you hear the dead people talking”
and then Val says “Dead people don’t talk” and Carol says “of course
they do / they whisper LIVE LIVE”

(Slight pause.)

She’s right — they do talk

And

There IS a movement within this silence / there ARE voices / whis-
pers both real and imagined.

I came to hear Colette tell me “you’re a writer / where’s your pen?”

I came to hear Yves Montand sing to me and blow me a kiss and I
see Simone Signoret giving him a playful slap and Apollinaire looks
on, laughing

I want all of them to look at me and smile and say “FAMILY”

And the people I pass on my way to see Oscar Wilde — we smile
at each other / point each other to directions that lead to Chopin /
Colette / Proust

All of us have come / ALL of us who are SEEKING / have come to
be with THESE people here in Père Lachaise — who beyond our
parents helped us give birth to ourselves.

I notice a girl.

walking in my direction

— this young girl / more like a woman still with the presence of a girl
/ mixed race / not sure what races / she smiles at me / awkward — she’s
awkward — she’s dressed the way I was dressed at her age / this girl
— young woman — tries to dress strikingly / tries to look fashionably
unfashionable but because of her size / — because the clothing is not
made in her size OR if it is / she can’t afford it, she tries to do a poor
man’s mix-matched version of what she’d like it to be

And

Like me she can’t quite pull it off

And

She’s holding a book

And

The way she holds the book — the precious way she holds the
book —

I KNOW she reads a lot

I don’t know her but I can TELL she reads A LOT

Like me does she find solace in books / music?

(Beat.)

I watch her walk
Her shoulders are hunched / TIGHT
Look at her
My god how I see ME in her hunched walk
And

I wonder if her mother like my mother (especially when my mother was drunk which was very Often) possibly told this girl stories about how when she was young and how her *(Does this in mother's voice.)* “dress matched her bag which matched her shoes / which matched her nails” and possibly this girl’s mother like my mother also said *(Does this in mother's voice.)* “I want you to look good because you’re a reflection of ME / you HAVE to be a reflection of ME”

(Beat.)

She looks at me
/ she looks at me like she knows me /

She looks at me like she REALLY knows me
Her eyes are present but also faraway.
Looking into her eyes / there is something otherworldly in them

She keeps looking at me
Fixed / drifting eyes
I can't figure it out — the look
Her look
I look away / I look back
And
Still she's looking
The gaze direct
Soft and direct at the same time
But
There is ANOTHER part that is too direct
There is softness and something overpowering

And
I'm getting angry
Real angry
(Pause.)

I turn my back and walk away.

I walk to Division 6 / grave number 30.

Jim Morrison

On Morrison's grave there are liquor bottles / scraps of paper saying things like LONG LIVE THE LIZARD KING / THE LIZARD KING REIGNS.

There is a small fence around it so no one can get too close

Morrison's headstone was stolen some years ago

So after that / there's been heavy security around his grave

There is a security guard who scans the crowd and as she looks at the crowd / she can't quite understand what the fascination is

She looks at us and at certain points frowns / laughs / shakes her head
I'm looking at the corners of her mouth and there is a something
sarcastic / bitter in those corners

I think how if had her job / I wouldn't just see myself as a security guard

As someone Anxious to BUST somebody

If I worked here / I'd see myself as a link / guide between the living
and the dead

I'd see these people who have come to see Jim Morrison and know
that they were SEEKING

I'd WANT to point my finger in whatever direction that person /
those people needed to go and say without saying "yes there was/IS
someone who felt/feels the way you felt/feel / they did it through
language / paint / song."

I would not stand there like this woman — sneering / indifferent
(Pause.)

Look at her — cynical as hell — out and out NASTY — God forgive
me I'd like to knock the shit out of this broad

(Beat.)

It is rainy in Paris today and not too many people are here but more
than what one would think.

Myself and few others are standing by the grave site

A woman — older — of Morrison's Generation throws flowers on
to his grave

A boy — young man stands by the grave site / headphones on

I look at him

He looks back

We nod

We connect

He's listening to the DOORS

I can't hear what song he's listening to from where I am / he's standing on one side of the grave and I on the other but he is listening to the Doors and he's moving his head / his eyes open and close

And

Whatever riff/word he's listening to RIGHT now

However/whatever is reaching him

Massaging him

Making him cry — because within a moment his eyes filled with tears

However

Morrison

Krieger

Manzarek

And

Densmore are moving him

Watching him — I too become moved

And

Watching him / I think of the very first time I heard "Light My Fire"
(*Beat.*)

I remember listening to WABC-AM — Cousin Brucie and sweeping the living room floor.

Sweeping the living room floor in the house I shared with her — my mother

This vermin-filled house with dead colored linoleum, booze stains and cigarette holes

It's Saturday and I'm cleaning this living room floor / readying this worn living room floor for my mother and her friends and their weekly Saturday night drunk

Bottles of Johnnie Walker Red / white label bottles soon to be emptied are waiting on the table.

I clean this floor — HATING what the night will bring
(*Beat.*)

Then Cousin Brucie announces (*Does him.*) "Cousins — Here's 'Light My Fire' by the Doors — we all know José Feliciano covered it recently but of course COUSINS — the DOORS did it first and I wanna play the uncut version for you — ALL MY COUSINS"

The Doors ... hearing THIS — THIS "LIGHT MY FIRE" ...
(*Slight pause.*)

FOREVER

by Dael Orlandersmith

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Inspired by her experiences in Paris at the famed Père Lachaise Cemetery — the final resting place of such legendary artists as Richard Wright and Jim Morrison — award-winning playwright/performer Dael Orlandersmith explores the strange way we form powerful bonds with people who, though unrelated to us by blood, come to feel like family. Observing strangers from around the world making pilgrimages to their favorite artist's grave, Orlandersmith investigates the complex legacy she received from her mother — a legacy of bitterness, abuse, and frustration, but also of poetry, music, and art.

"In this raw and haunting work about her troubled youth and the rocky path she forged out of it, Ms. Orlandersmith illuminates in acid-etched detail her fraught relationship with her mother, who was abusive and alcoholic but also set an example in her hunger for books and music ..." —**The New York Times**

"... if we, the audience, must revisit [Orlandersmith's] painful history, can't we be kidded through the hardest incidents? Is there a part where mother and daughter cry and forgive, like in the movies? No. ... If Orlandersmith refuses to pander to us, denying us our pat Hollywood closure, she herself embodies the hope implicit in her story." —**LA Times**

"... a simple, emotional journey through the eyes of one woman ... Dael Orlandersmith, a Pulitzer Prize finalist and acclaimed dramatist, is a powerhouse ..." —**Entertainment Weekly**

Also by Dael Orlandersmith

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and more

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