

**MISS JULIE:
FREEDOM
SUMMER**

BY STEPHEN SACHS

**FROM THE PLAY BY
AUGUST STRINDBERG**



**DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.**

MISS JULIE: FREEDOM SUMMER
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The world premiere of MISS JULIE: FREEDOM SUMMER was presented by the Fountain Theatre (Deborah Lawlor and Stephen Sachs, Artistic Directors) in Los Angeles, California, on February 16, 2007. It was directed by Stephen Sachs and the production stage manager was Terri Roberts. The cast was as follows:

MISS JULIE Tracy Middendorf
JOHN Chuma Gault
CHRISTINE Judith Moreland

The Canadian co-premiere of MISS JULIE: FREEDOM SUMMER was presented by the Vancouver Playhouse, Vancouver, British Columbia, on January 10, 2009, and Canadian Stage Company, Toronto, Ontario, on February 12, 2009. The productions were directed by Stephen Sachs and the production stage manager was Bill Jamieson. The cast was as follows:

MISS JULIE Caroline Cave
JOHN Kevin Hanchard
CHRISTINE Raven Dauda

CHARACTERS

MISS JULIE

The daughter of a wealthy superior court judge, white.

JOHN

Her father's chauffeur, African American.

CHRISTINE

The cook, African American.

TIME and PLACE

The large kitchen of a country estate in Greenwood, Mississippi.
The night of July 4th, 1964.

Two days after the signing of the Civil Rights Act by President Lyndon Johnson.

NOTE

This is not a literal translation of Strindberg's *Miss Julie*. It is a free adaptation, in the spirit of freedom.

MISS JULIE: FREEDOM SUMMER

Night. The downstairs kitchen of a large estate. A large butcher block cutting table is center. A small stairway leads upstairs. A telephone on the wall. A radio sits on the counter. A door, upstage center, leads outside, where a Fourth of July party is happening beyond, in the barn. Live music and laughter outside, coming from the barn in the distance.

Christine at the cutting table with a knife, chopping blood-red intestines. She dumps the bits into the pot on the stove, stirs. She wears a cotton dress with a cooking apron over it.

John enters, dressed in a chauffeur's uniform. Hangs the car keys on a hook by the door.

JOHN. I miss the fireworks?

CHRISTINE. Past midnight.

JOHN. Drove His Honor down to City Hall. Fourth of July Jubilee Ball.

CHRISTINE. Took your sweet time.

JOHN. Should have seen all the news folk.

CHRISTINE. I ate.

JOHN. Reporters from Jackson, Memphis ...

CHRISTINE. Done waitin'.

JOHN. Even TV. Bunch of them Freedom crowd out on the front steps makin' noise. Signs say, "Make Mississippi part of the United States of America." (*Chuckles.*) Sheriff Ray and his boys pushed their ass across the street. They had to escort His Honor into the place.

CHRISTINE. How's His Honor gettin' back?

JOHN. Ridin' home with Mayor Tate.

CHRISTINE. I seen you pull in half-hour ago.

JOHN. I park the car. Hear music and folks laughin', carryin' on in the barn. I go in. Take a look. What you think I see?

CHRISTINE. Hm?

JOHN. Miss Julie. Dancing like a wildcat with every fool nigger in the place.

CHRISTINE. Lord have mercy.

JOHN. She gets one look at me, slides up and says, "You. Dance with me. Now."

CHRISTINE. What you say?

JOHN. Can't say no. That bitch is crazy.

CHRISTINE. Her heart's broke. Claire say Miss Julie's takin' pills.

JOHN. For what?

CHRISTINE. Depression.

JOHN. Must be working.

CHRISTINE. Mighty nice of Miss Julie lettin' the work folk use the barn tonight.

JOHN. His Honor better not be hearin' 'bout it.

CHRISTINE. No one gonna hear nothin'.

JOHN. That field nigger Zeke, he say anythin' to the white man for a dollar. Why is Miss Julie home slummin' with the help, anyway? She should be downtown with her father at the Jubilee Ball.

CHRISTINE. She don't want to be seen by no society yet. It's embarassin'.

JOHN. That good ol' boy dumpin' her.

CHRISTINE. She called off the engagement.

JOHN. That what she say.

CHRISTINE. Her biz'ness.

JOHN. I seen it. What went down in that stable. They thought they was alone. She was showing him Black Jack, that new gelding she got. Had her riding crop in her hand. Before I knew it, she was spanking that fool man with it.

CHRISTINE. Spankin' him?

JOHN. "Training him," she called it. "Breaking him in." She'd crack him with that whip, puttin' him through his paces, and sure as I'm standin' here that man would whinny and jump like a damn circus pony.

CHRISTINE. Lord have mercy.

JOHN. Finally he got a lick of sense.

CHRISTINE. (*Muttering to herself.*) White folks.

JOHN. He told her stop. She say no. So he smacks her right across the face. Cut her cheek with his ring.

CHRISTINE. What she do then?

JOHN. You save me a supper plate?

CHRISTINE. Don't I always? *(She goes to the stove to fetch his plate.)*

JOHN. Baby, you a gift to any man.

CHRISTINE. What you doin' down there in that stable hidin'?

JOHN. I don't deserve a woman fine as you.

CHRISTINE. Got that right.

JOHN. Damn, must be ninety in here. *(He presses his body up behind her at the stove, his hands on her. Wiping her sweat.)* Hot. Wet. The way I like. *(Suggestive.)* What you got luscious for me to eat?

CHRISTINE. Kidney stew. Your second favorite organ. *(She pushes him back into a chair at the table.)* When you gonna try on that new shirt I bought you? *(She sets down his plate. He feels it.)*

JOHN. Ain't you gonna warm the plate?

CHRISTINE. Uppity as His Honor. You actin' worse than him every day. *(He eats. She sits beside him, leans forward. Kisses his neck.)* What's that smell on you? Lilac?

JOHN. *(Swatting her away.)* Get off me, girl, while I'm eatin'.

CHRISTINE. *(Recoils.)* Yes, sir. Excuse me, sir. *(She goes to the fridge. Opens it. John eats. He holds up a newspaper on the table.)*

JOHN. *(Looks to Christine.)* You ready?

CHRISTINE. *(Their routine.)* Go on.

JOHN. *(Reading the paper to her.)* Says here the president sent two hundred men down here to drag the river yesterday up in Neshoba County. Looking for the bodies of those three civil rights workers. Know what they found instead? Bodies of two dead Negroes. One cut in half. The other with no head. No one knows who they are. Or how long they been there. *(Christine has pulled a pitcher of iced tea from the fridge.)*

CHRISTINE. Mississippi the onliest state in the Union where you can drag a river and know the body of somebody is gonna come up. *(She starts to pour iced tea into a glass for him.)*

JOHN. Iced tea? Baby, fetch me a beer.

CHRISTINE. This here still a dry county.

JOHN. I am dry.

CHRISTINE. You ain't above the law. The law still say —

JOHN. Don't be talkin' to me about the law. Crackers down here runnin' this state too damn ignorant to know they losin' by their own law.

CHRISTINE. That right? And you so smart?

JOHN. We the poorest state in America. His Honor say we missin' out on all that liquor tax money.

CHRISTINE. *His Honor say.*

JOHN. That's right. His Honor say. What got four eyes but can't see? Mississippi.

CHRISTINE. Reverend Jake preached on temperance again last Sunday. If you was there, you'da known.

JOHN. Reach on back there. Behind the milk bottles. That where he keep the beer.

CHRISTINE. I know where he keep it.

JOHN. Go on. (*She doesn't move.*) Go on. Ain't gonna bite ya. (*She gives him a look. Reaches into the fridge.*) It's a holiday. Fourth of July. Paper say it's Freedom Summer. All over the state. SNCC folk right here in Greenwood. Pushin' the vote.

CHRISTINE. I seen 'em.

JOHN. All that non-violence talk ain't gonna change nothin' down here. These crackers don't know nothin' from no non-violence. I ain't turnin' no other cheek. This country born outta violence. Time to take matters into our own hands.

CHRISTINE. You been to any of them SNCC meetin's?

JOHN. No, I ain't.

CHRISTINE. Why not?

JOHN. My name is Jess and I ain't in that mess.

CHRISTINE. You black, you in the mess. SNCC got a Freedom School goin' on at the church. Teachin' colored folk to read and write. They're walkin' neighborhoods, gettin' colored folk to line up at Miss Lamb's office down at the courthouse to register.

JOHN. How come you know so much?

CHRISTINE. I took myself down to a meetin'. Last night. (*She sets down his beer on the table.*) I fetched it. But I ain't gonna open it.

JOHN. Don't be messin' up His Honor's paper now. (*She returns to the stove. He studies her. Holds up newspaper.*) Baby, you can't hardly read nothin'. What you gonna do at that SNCC office?

CHRISTINE. (*At the stove.*) Figure I can answer phones. Mimeographin'. Whatever needs doin'.

JOHN. You gonna line up down at the courthouse? With all the rest of them niggers? (*She stirs the pot.*) You better watch yourself. His Honor ask me 'bout you. In the car tonight. (*She halts.*) He lean forward and he ask me, "Now, lookit here, that Christine ... she

ain't gettin' herself all mixed up in that niggah-vote mess, is she?" I say, "No, sir." He say, "You tell her if I ever catch her down at that courthouse tryin' to register? She is fired. You tell her that." *(Pause.)*

CHRISTINE. *(Shaken.)* SNCC folk say we the majority in this here state, but we got five whole counties with not one black voter. Not one. Ain't you wanna vote?

JOHN. Oh, I'm gonna vote, all right. But come next votin' time, I'll be castin' my ballot in another state.

CHRISTINE. That right?

JOHN. Sure as I'm sittin' here.

CHRISTINE. And if you still here?

JOHN. Somebody gonna end up dead. *(The paper.)* Johnson signed that Civil Rights bill.

CHRISTINE. Don't read me no more.

JOHN. *(Reading.)* "All persons are entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of goods, services, privileges, and advantages under the law." Trouble is, Mr. President, ain't no law down here. *(John pushes the beer aside. Opens a drawer, pulls out a bottle of wine.)* I got something, shall we say, more befittin' a night of emancipation.

CHRISTINE. You steal that from the cellar?

JOHN. His Honor's best.

CHRISTINE. Lord have mercy.

JOHN. Fetch me a glass.

CHRISTINE. Fetch it yourself. *(He grunts. Goes to the cupboard. Christine returns to the stove, stirs the pot.)* You got trouble looking for you, John. And when it finds you? Heaven help the poor woman gettin' you as a husband.

JOHN. If you ain't careful, might be you. You'd be lucky to get a man fine as me.

CHRISTINE. I'll be dead in my grave before you get around to ...

JOHN. *(Re: the wine bottle.)* I remember buying a crate of this stuff with His Honor down in New Orleans. Thirty dollar a bottle.

CHRISTINE. He paid. You drove.

JOHN. *(Pours himself a glass of wine.)* Happy birthday, America. *(Raises his glass.)* To LBJ and The Great Society! *(Downs the wine.)* Promising. With a bitter aftertaste. *(Then.)* Damn, woman. What's that stink you got cookin'?

CHRISTINE. Some root. Innards. Herbs. Edna May done give 'em to me.

JOHN. That conjure woman in the field? *(Sniffs.)* What's it do?

MISS JULIE: FREEDOM SUMMER

by Stephen Sachs

1M, 2W

A re-imagined adaptation of August Strindberg's masterpiece, set in Mississippi on the night of July 4, 1964, two days after the signing of the Civil Rights Act during the explosive Freedom Summer of the Civil Rights Era. The white Miss Julie and her black chauffeur, John, struggle for independence and freedom from the personal and social demons that bind them. This sexually-charged social drama explores racial and sexual tensions in a riveting struggle for power, freedom, and social change.

"Critic's choice! A riveting new adaptation of Strindberg's classic about forbidden desire. Stephen Sachs transposes the action to 1964 Mississippi, where stirrings of the Civil Rights Movement threaten the Old South status quo." —**Los Angeles Times**

"First class! Smoldering ... a gripping piece of theater." —**The Hollywood Reporter**

"August Strindberg, step aside. Stephen Sachs has taken Miss Julie and made her his own. MISS JULE: FREEDOM SUMMER is nothing short of a breathtaking adaptation." —**The Vancouver Sun**

"... smolders with relevance and passion. In MISS JULE: FREEDOM SUMMER, Sachs has kept Strindberg's basic plot about sex, power and entrapment. But he's raised the stakes incredibly." —**Now Magazine (Toronto)**

"The best production of Miss Julie, either straight up or with a twist, that I have seen. This doesn't pretend to be the original play; it's a new text that follows the old one closely, but not exactly, while grabbing at what's most vital about it." —**National Post (Toronto)**

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