



SHOWS FOR DAYS

BY

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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



SHOWS FOR DAYS

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For Linda Boyer

SHOWS FOR DAYS was originally produced by Lincoln Center Theater, New York City, on June 6, 2015. It was directed by Jerry Zaks, the set designer was John Lee Beatty, the costume designer was William Ivey Long, the lighting designer was Natasha Katz, the sound designer was Leon Rothenberg, and the stage manager was William H. Lang. The cast was as follows:

CAR Michael Urie
SID Dale Soules
MARIA Zoë Winters
CLIVE Lance Coadie Williams
IRENE Patti LuPone
DAMIEN Jordan Dean

CHARACTERS

CAR

SID

MARIA

CLIVE

IRENE

DAMIEN

“...finally, the idea of a theatre as a group of people who come together to work hard, yet joyfully, who know how to love and how to forgive each other, and who are happy in what is both the most terrible and the most beautiful trade in the world...”

—Giorgio Strehler
Piccolo Teatro di Milano

SHOWS FOR DAYS

ACT ONE

An empty rehearsal room. During the pre-show, the crew spikes the stage with tape.

When the taping is complete, Car, a man in his forties—who looks young enough to play a lot younger—walks through the door into the empty space. He flicks on the overhead lighting. It isn't fluorescent because too many directors complain it gives them headaches. He has a folder of papers, photographs. Research. He looks around at the room, then to the audience.

CAR. Hey. The first place is 711 Penn Street, Reading, Pennsylvania. That's the blue tape. Okay. It's a hat store. An abandoned hat store. Storefront. Thirty feet wide. Seventy feet long. This is the side view. On either side are abandoned buildings. A men's clothing store upstage. A hobby store where you're sitting. Built in the teens of the last century. 1911, says a cornerstone. And there was a new storefront put on in the fifties. Empty now, just a big shoebox. *(Beat.)* I once wrote a show, really turned out great. The show moved to Broadway and then it closed after three weeks. So I sent off a text to everyone who was contacting me so upset—"What can I tell you? Showbiz." But it spell-corrected, "What can I tell you? Shoebox." What was interesting is how many of my arty friends texted back to me, "Yeah right." *(Goes back to the prop storage and returns wheeling on a desk and chairs as necessary.)* Curtained off by the entrance is the tiniest of offices. Desk. A chair. All found in the street. With a telephone—that somehow still works. *(He stops for a moment.)* I've been thinking about theater a lot lately. I don't usually think about theater, I just do it. But I have been thinking about it and inevitably

where I first learned what it was. With an amateur troupe in Pennsylvania. Stick with me, I think there's stuff here. Like—oh my God—the performance space! Rows of chairs from a church basement set up over there. A slightly raised platform over here. The platform is eight feet by twelve feet. Above it, hanging from the ceiling, are coffee cans painted black with light bulbs in them. And colored cellophane. Held on with rubber bands. It is May of 1973. And a loaf of bread cost—Oh who the fuck cares, I hate when people do that. I am fourteen. I've convinced my parents to let me go to Reading for the day. Officially to go shopping at Pomeroy's. Unofficially...well. I am fourteen. Oh and when I walk in the phone is ringing. No wait, not at first. (*Looks around the room.*) Hello? Hello? (*Car is fourteen. He walks into the front door as if he's walking into a cave. He walks in and walks over to the desk. He sees a knife. He picks it up. Pretty threatening. He touches the tip. It collapses into the handle—it is a prop knife. He does it again. The phone rings. Startled, he quickly puts the knife down. Sid, a woman in coveralls, enters.*)

SID. You hear a phone ring, you answer it, you little fucker. And don't touch the props. (*Answering phone.*) Theater. Prometheus theater. First show's tonight. Sure how many? (*Car clears his throat. Sid glares at him.*) Great. Yeah, opening tonight. Thanks. Curtain's at 8:30. (*As Sid hangs up she writes something on a tablet. Car is about to clear his throat. Sid cuts him off.*) And you, Camille, what? You coughing up a lung?

CAR. I was just in town doing some work. Killing time before my bus. Thought I could help out. It said in the paper—

SID. Christ we're desperate. Well, that set don't paint itself. (*She walks back to the stage, he follows.*) What's your name?

CAR. Car.

SID. Ho ho. You must be a Wyomissing boy or are your parents just climbers?

CAR. Wyomissing.

SID. Just paint the side there. (*Watches him paint.*) Well, that sucks.

MARIA. (*Enters with a largish box.*) Howdy doody.

SID. Maria, you better have programs!

MARIA. I have programs. That is such a not-nice greeting. Wouldn't you know, I park all the way up by the freakin' pagoda almost, I swear to you, and what's sitting here, in front of the theater? Bright as a button? Parking spaces. Spaces for days. Sid, we have to run the Bala Cynwyd scene, I am not getting the lines there.

SID. You wanna? Aren't you afraid it will lose some of the spontaneity of the moment?

MARIA. But if I'm searching for the line—

SID. But I like that look on your face. It's like you don't know what you're going to say next. That first show you did at Civic Players you had that look on your face. It was very memorable.

MARIA. I was playing Helen Keller! We'll ask Irene, or this kid can run lines—you read? Sprechen Sie English? Honey, why are you here?

SID. Car, that's Maria, she's the neediest actress in the world and that's saying something. Maria that's Car. He's from Wyomissing and he wants to paint so be nice to him. Paint! Ooh, heads up Maria, watch out for stage left, it's still wet.

CAR. (*Looking at the theater space.*) Is this where the show happens? Sorta small. (*Clive, an African American gentleman in knee-high boots, breezes in. The Roscoe Lee Browne of Southeastern Pennsylvania, with women's hats piled high atop his head.*)

CLIVE. And so the beautiful girl breezes into her Manhattan apartment and kisses her sister.

SID. Hats, thank the Lord!

MARIA. Oh wait—I know this—

CLIVE. Kisses her grandfather—

MARIA. Don't tell me—

SID. (*Doing the scene.*) Hello, Alice.

MARIA and SID. *You Can't Take It with You!*

MARIA. The only show title they never shorten, have you ever noticed? "What did you do this season?" "Oh *Forum, Greasepaint, Marat/Sade, Oh Dad, and You Can't Take It with You.*"

CLIVE. (*Coming in on her "Greasepaint" and speaking over her.*) And kisses the not entirely unattractive white boy.

SID. Now Clive, leave him be.

MARIA. I mean even *Hello, Dolly!* people just call *Dolly*. Don't you—

CLIVE. For the love of God, Maria, those of us in the know refer to it as *Can't Take It with You*. (*A big cry face from Maria.*)

SID. Now the waterworks.

MARIA. (*Through sobs.*) I have worked in this area's theaters for SEASONS and nobody pays me any attention it's all Irene and SID and CLIVE and SPECIAL SPECIAL LARRY AND GAIL AND BARBARA PRUSSMAN—and ooh isn't Kurt something and now even a snotty rich kid from Wyomissing gets more attention than

me, you people are all MONGOLOIDS!! (*She storms out the front door and down the street.*)

SID. I don't think she even knows what "mongoloids" means. So, Car—

CLIVE. First name?

CAR. Yeah.

CLIVE. Love.

SID. Just finish up and then you can go Car.

CLIVE. No, don't discard him. Put him onstage. There are never any boys in Reading productions. It's all ladies and queens—whenever you see a photo from a past play you wonder—was there a war on during this show's run?

MARIA. (*Reenters.*) I think I feel a lot better now.

CLIVE. Little Maria, come here that I might hold you and lavish attention upon you.

MARIA. Just openings are so—I'm just raw nerves, like all over. And, you know, a whole new theater and—

CLIVE. Of course. And the mean boy from Wyomissing is going away.

MARIA. It's all my fault. Berks County has lost another male actor because of my ego. First Randy Geissinger now this one.

CAR. I'm not an actor. I'll just go—I have to catch the 8:15 bus back to Wyo anyways. I was just killin' time till the bus came. I don't need to be here.

SID. Heads up! Light check. We're going dark. Nobody move. (*She flips the house lights off. And the stage lights on. Pools of light appear on the stage.*)

CAR. (*Looking at lights.*) Whoa. Cool. (*Sid turns those lights off and a new set on. Irene is there.*)

IRENE. (*Strikes a dramatic pose.*) Oy.

MARIA. Irene!

IRENE. I tell you, if theater was easy, the goyim would do it. (*As Irene talks she casually takes off her blouse and meanders around in her bra.*)

SID. Here she is! (*She turns the house lights back on.*) So?

IRENE. I met with Jo Jo Fancy Pants, Mr. City Commissioner. He gave us the building. Official. Well a handshake. (*General cheer.*) Ours all ours.

SID. Till they tear it down.

IRENE. Onward and upward with the arts!

SID. Jo Jo's handshake ain't worth shit. What about the mayor?

IRENE. I did not visit Mayor McCheese.

SID. She doesn't even know the name of the town's mayor.

IRENE. Lackey, Winton Lackey, are you quite quite happy now, you machashaifeh?

SID. No. You only did half of what I told you to do. And I don't see your husband, Ben, here helping out— (*From out of the desk drawer Irene pulls an Emilio Pucci caftan. As she continues talking, she whips the caftan over her head and removes her slacks. All while keeping the cigarette in her mouth.*)

IRENE. Lesbians are not a merry people per se. I think it's because they esteem the working class, all that flannel and yard work. Now gay men—they dream of being queens, and I for one relish them. Who is this? Where are you from boy? Wyomissing? Getting an eyeful of the black pansies? The bull dykes? The chatty yentas? The whole mishpocha?

CLIVE. I adore you.

IRENE. And I, you. I shall mount a production of *Emperor Jones* for you, so help me.

CLIVE. I'm more of a "Shirley Jones."

IRENE. Tonight we open—a new show, a new theater, a new company, a new beginning! (*Applause.*)

SID. I hope we don't suck.

IRENE. You're being a bitch, but I say NOTHING.

SID. Thank you, Irene. (*Car touches the knife, pushes the blade in.*)

IRENE. Boychick, please do not touch the properties, some of them are quite, quite valuable.

CLIVE. Dewar's, sweet pet? (*Pulling bottle from attaché case.*)

IRENE. Never. Not before a performance. Wait. Who's the writer this time?

MARIA. Philip Barry

IRENE. (*Indicates Clive should pour.*) Well he wrote it with a light on, I should perform it with a light on. (*Pause.*) You there, new boy— Could you hand me from my purse a blue pill. I feel dizzy again.

CLIVE. Irene, I don't mean to be demanding—but could the actors have a dressing room?

IRENE. (*Looking at Car, who is just looking at her open purse.*) Blue pill blue pill.

CAR. What shade of blue?

IRENE. This one.

SID. What's with the pills, Irene? Your purse looks like Marilyn Monroe's nightstand.

SHOWS FOR DAYS

by Douglas Carter Beane

3M, 3W

It's May 1973 when a young man wanders into a dilapidated community theater in Reading, PA. The company members welcome him—well, only because they need a set painter that day. The young man then proceeds to soak up all the idealism and the craziness that comes with being part of a struggling theater company with big dreams. When a playwright looks back at his beginnings in the theater and decides to chronicle those experiences in a play, all sorts of things can happen. If you're Douglas Carter Beane, who grew out of his Reading, PA, community theater days to become one of the stage's master writers, it's bound to bring a measure of gimlet-eyed reflection, a large dollop of self-deprecation, and a heaping dose of hilarity.

"As the author of plays like The Little Dog Laughed, Mr. Beane has proved himself one of our most agile and penetrating satirists. But SHOWS FOR DAYS is trying for something deeper and more affectionate. This play is [in the mold of] Act One, Moss Hart's star-struck memoir of falling in love with showbiz, flavored with the rose-colored hue of The Glass Menagerie."

—The New York Times

"SHOWS FOR DAYS tugs at the theater-lover's heartstrings...the play finely showcases Beane's razor-sharp wit—a talent we see his corresponding character hone throughout the play itself, foreboding Beane's future oeuvre of Tony-nominated works..."

—TheaterMania.com

"Delicious and toothsome..."

—Deadline

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