

HIR

BY TAYLOR MAC



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The New York City premiere of HIR was produced by Playwrights Horizons, Inc. (Tim Sanford, Artistic Director; Leslie Marcus, Managing Director; Carol Fishman, General Manager), opening on October 16th, 2015. It was directed by Niegel Smith; the set design was by David Zinn; the costume design was by Gabriel Berry; the lighting design was by Mike Inwood; the sound design was by Fitz Patton; the production stage manager was Stephen Milosevich. The cast was as follows:

ISAAC CONNOR Cameron Scoggins
PAIGE CONNOR Kristine Nielsen
MAX CONNOR Tom Phelan
ARNOLD CONNOR Daniel Oreskes

HIR was developed and given its world premiere at the Magic Theatre (Loretta Greco, Producing Artistic Director), in San Francisco, California, opening on February 4, 2014. It was directed by Niegel Smith; the set design was by Alexis Distler; the costume design was by Christine Crook; the lighting design was by Mike Inwood; the sound design was by Sara Huddleston. The cast was as follows:

ISAAC CONNOR Ben Euphrat
PAIGE CONNOR Nancy Opel
MAX CONNOR Jax Jackson
ARNOLD CONNOR Mark Anderson Phillips

HIR was workshopped as part of the Creativity Fund, a program of New Dramatists.

CHARACTERS

ISAAC CONNOR: 24. Cisgender son of Paige and Arnold. Brother to Max. Isaac's main actions are to assess the situation, assert himself, convert, and keep things under control. The play is, for Isaac, one long attempt at squashing down a major PTSD explosion. At times he is more successful (meaning he can almost relax) than others, and he uses different tactics (including the slightly more fun action of teasing), but ultimately fails. There should be peaks and valleys, but a slow burn is what's been crafted into the play.

PAIGE CONNOR: 55. Cisgender mother to Max and Isaac. Wife to Arnold. Main actions are to entertain, excite (with new information she's discovered), and tear apart the old regimes.

MAX CONNOR: 17. Transgender child of Paige and Arnold. Sibling to Isaac. Main actions are to excite (with new information ze's discovered), ward off attacks, showboat, raise hir status on the family totem pole, and stake hir intellectual territory. It's important to me that the actor playing Max be someone who was a biological female and now identifies as transgender or gender-queer.

ARNOLD CONNOR: 58. Cisgender father to Isaac and Max and husband to Paige. Main actions are those of an old dog: eat, sleep and be comfortable. Arnold was an angry man but has had a stroke, which turned him into more of a clown. Rather like a slower/older Harpo. When he feels something, he feels it with no censors. He can easily switch from complete joy to complete sorrow and back again, in a heartbeat.

SETTING

The action of the play takes place in a kitchen/family room of a prairie house in the central valley of California, during a particularly hot summer, in August. It is the kind of home that, no matter how hard you clean, will always seem dirty. Dishes are piled up in the sink, there's cracking wallpaper and decade-old stains, piles of laundry (to the point where it's difficult to walk) are strewn about, and there seems to be a layer of dust on everything.

It is an absolute disaster in terms of its disorder. There are two doors: the front door and the back door, which leads to a medium-sized back yard. A hallway leads from the kitchen to the bedrooms. Arnold's cardboard box bed/hut is visible in the living room, as is part of the couch. The house was built by a first-time builder, in the early '70s, not with the intent to last as long as it has. It is a starter home that never really got started and can't seem to end.

ITALICS

The family calls Isaac "I" as a nickname. I've italicized it so that it can be distinguished from the first person singular. Other italicized words indicate when a word is stressed. If the actor/director feels a different emphasis is more natural to them and the action/meaning of the line isn't changed, then please feel free to ignore the italics (but make sure you try them a few times first).

ARNOLD'S INTERJECTIONS

Many of Arnold's one-word interjections weren't intended to be given the full weight of a line. The director and actors must pick and choose. The actor should feel free to improvise additional grunts and sounds throughout (as should all the actors), when appropriate, but not actual words.

ACTUAL CONCERN

For the most part Paige either takes the tough love approach with Isaac or tries to entertain him and/or be silly with him, as a way to avoid dealing with his pain. Perhaps five or six times in the play her concern for him loses its edge or frivolity. These are indicated in the parenthetical when it says (*Actual concern.*)

?

Question mark where dialogue would be indicates the character gestures or expresses nonverbal confusion. These take the time it would take to say, “What,” “Duh,” or “Okay?”

ABSURD REALISM

I’m choosing to call the genre of this play Absurd Realism. What I mean by this is that the absurdity comes from a heightened but realistic point of view. For example, the blinds are broken and nobody has bothered to fix them. So, at a certain point during the day the sun shines into the house so brightly that everyone wears sunglasses or walks around with their hands shielding their eyes. Absurd Realism is simply realistic characters in a circumstance that is so extremely real it is absurd. If at any moment it feels like your production is venturing into Theatre of the Absurd, Theatre of the Ridiculous, a Brechtian Remove, or a meta-theatrical deconstruction, then rein it in. Likewise, if it feels like Realism is steering every choice, try to find the absurdity in that Realism and turn the volume up.

HIR

ACT ONE

Seven o'clock in the morning. Paige is waiting by the back door, looking out of it. She's had too much coffee. Arnold eats a bowl of mush, as someone with brain damage would. He wears a frilly woman's nightgown. He has extreme makeup on and a clown wig, making him look like an effeminate cross-dressing clown. Paige pours herself another cup of coffee. She goes back to the door.

ISAAC. *(Trying to open the front door, which is blocked by too much stuff.)* I'm home—

PAIGE. Honey?

ISAAC. *(Trying to open the door.)* Is something blocking the door?

PAIGE. Come around back. Arnold, get in your place!

ISAAC. Why won't the door open?

PAIGE. I thought you'd use the back.

ISAAC. Why wouldn't I use the front door?

PAIGE. It's blocked.

ISAAC. What's blocking it?

PAIGE. We were getting rid of things and stopped caring.

ISAAC. So you left stuff blocking the door?

PAIGE. Come around back.

ISAAC. You can't move the stuff?

PAIGE. There's too much.

ISAAC. That's a fire hazard, Mom.

PAIGE. Oh, wouldn't that be wonderful.

ISAAC. What?

PAIGE. Come around back. ISAAC. I'm coming 'round back.
What?

ISAAC. I said—

PAIGE. Come around back.

ISAAC. I know.

PAIGE. (*Running to the hallway and shouting down it.*) MAAAA
AAAAX, YOUR BROTHER IS FINALLY HERE FROM THE
WAR! (*To Arnold, excited for Isaac to see Arnold in his place, dressed
like a clown.*) Arnie. Away from the door. Arnie. Arnie away from
the door. Arnie. Arnold, sit in your chair. Your chair. Sit in your
chair. Arnold! Get in your place for I.

*Paige loses patience and moves Arnold to the chair. Isaac opens
the back door and enters.*

ISAAC. Why's the lawn so overgrown— (*Seeing the disaster that is
the home.*) OOAH!

PAIGE. (*Scared by Isaac's scream.*) OOAH!

ISAAC. JESUS HELL!

PAIGE. (*Laughing.*) You scared me.

ISAAC. What happened?

PAIGE. Why did you yell like that?

ISAAC. It's a fucking disaster in here.

PAIGE. Language.

ISAAC. What—

PAIGE. (*To Isaac.*) Sit down.

ISAAC. (*Meaning, "Answer me."*) Mom!

PAIGE. (*Excited to tell him.*) Honey sit down, I have so much to
tell you. Arnie, close the door.

ISAAC. (*Seeing Arnold for the first time and freaking out.*) OOAH!

PAIGE. (*Another scared scream at his scream.*) OOAH! (*Laughing.*)
You keep scaring me.

ISAAC. DAD?

PAIGE. (*To Isaac.*) Isn't it great. (*To Arnold.*) Arnie, close the door,
you can see the heat in waves. Arnie, close the door. The air can't
fight the world. We're cooling and heating the planet at the same
time. Arnie, close the door. Arnie, close the door. The door. Close
it. Close it. Close the door. Yes the door. Yes the door, the door.
Close the door.

ISAAC. I got it—

PAIGE. (*To Isaac.*) He will do it! (*To Arnold.*) Arnie, close the door.
Close the door. Arnold, close the door. Yes. The door. The door.
Close the door. Close it. Close. Close. Close the door. Close the

door. Close the door, close the door, close the door, close the door, close the door. Door. Door. Door. Close. Close door. Yes. Hand. Hand on knob. Hand on knob. Yes. Yes. Push. Push. Yes. YES. CLOSE THE DOOR!

Arnold closes the door. Pause.

Isaac suddenly runs to the kitchen sink and pukes. Paige almost goes to him to help, but doesn't know what to do.

ISAAC. Why are there dishes everywhere?

ARNOLD. *(Going to turn the air-conditioning off.)* It's cold.

PAIGE. Don't you turn off that air.

ISAAC. *(To Arnold.)* Why are you dressed like that?

ARNOLD. It's cold.

PAIGE. *(Calling down the hallway to Max.)* MAAAAAAAAAX. GET IN HERE. YOUR BROTHER HAS FINALLY ARRIVED AND I WOULD RATHER NOT BE ANY LATER THAN WE'RE ALREADY GOING TO BE.

ARNOLD. *(Holding his penis, which is a habit he has.)* It's cold.

PAIGE. Yes, we heard you, Arnie.

ISAAC. Why is there air-conditioning?

PAIGE. I wanted it.

ISAAC. He's shivering.

PAIGE. Of course he is. It's freezing in here.

ISAAC. *(Going to turn the air-conditioning off.)* He hates air-conditioning.

PAIGE. Don't you touch that air. That air goes off when I say it goes off. *(Excited to share this new information.)* This is not a house of sweat anymore, Isaac. *(To Arnold, while throwing him a pink sweater with bedazzled kittens embroidered on it and reprimanding him for not following the rules.)* You know when you're cold you put on Sparkle Kitty.

ARNOLD. Sparkle.

PAIGE. Don't hold your penis.

ARNOLD. Penis.

Paige squirts Arnold with a spray bottle, the way you would a cat you're trying to train.

PAIGE. *(A realization.)* I forgot his estrogen. Too much new stuff.

ISAAC. Estrogen?

PAIGE. His complacency is contingent on the routines. *(As if to say, "How could anyone keep track of all this?")* Look at his pills.

There's all kinds of rules about when and how but I figure, if he doesn't have that long to live, all at once is fine. He won't swallow them so you have to put them in a shaky-shake. It takes him forever to drink it so you have to sit with him.

During the following she makes Arnold his shake.

ISAAC. The doctors prescribed him estrogen?

PAIGE. Oh god no. The doctors prescribed him poodle-diddle-wing-wang. The estrogen's extra.

ISAAC. ?

PAIGE. It keeps him docile.

ISAAC. He's gonna grow tits.

PAIGE. (*Commenting on his speech.*) Grammar!

ISAAC. He's *going* to grow tits.

PAIGE. Language!

ISAAC. He's going to grow breasts.

PAIGE. Then he can fondle *himself*. (*Actually concerned about Isaac.*)

You're so skinny. Isn't the military suppose to make you bulky?

ISAAC. You can't give him—Dad... men—estrogen.

PAIGE. Is that what the Marine Medical Affairs says?

ISAAC. I'm in the Mortuary Affairs. It's not medical. I pick up guts. Exploded guts.

PAIGE. (*Suddenly emotional, regarding how dangerous Isaac's job is.*)

Whose fault is that, that you chose to join the *Mortuary Affairs*?

ISAAC. Someone has to do it.

PAIGE. Someone does not have to do it.

ISAAC. You can't leave body parts lying around.

PAIGE. If it means *you* risking your life to pick them up, yes, you can.

ISAAC. The families need me to send their kids home.

PAIGE. You read that in the handbook.

ISAAC. That doesn't make it untrue.

PAIGE. (*Actual concern.*) You don't know what that job has done to you *I*.

ISAAC. I'm okay.

PAIGE. (*Actual concern.*) You don't know what you are. These things sneak up on you. They infect.

ISAAC. Nothing's wrong with me.

PAIGE. You think that because you've gotten numb to it. You can't pick up dead things every day and not get numb to it.

ISAAC. *I'm* fine.

PAIGE. You're obviously not fine.

ISAAC. Why does he have makeup on?

PAIGE. We were supposed to start this off right. (*Slight pause.*) It's just makeup.

ISAAC. He put makeup on himself?

PAIGE. I was sitting around waiting for you.

ISAAC. You *made* him look like that?

PAIGE. It's what we do now. We play dress-up. I thought it'd make you laugh.

ISAAC. Well it doesn't make me laugh. Fucking hell—

PAIGE. LANGUAGE!

ISAAC. (*Taking the wig off Arnold but about Paige.*) What's the matter with you!

PAIGE. Oh don't do that. You'll spoil it.

ISAAC. (*Looking in a drawer where the rags used to be and not finding them.*) He let you do that to him?

PAIGE. He's not all there *I*. It's okay. He doesn't even know.

ARNOLD. Err.

ISAAC. (*Looking through the laundry on the floor.*) I need a rag.

PAIGE. What for?

ISAAC. There's laundry everywhere!

PAIGE. I didn't want to fold it.

ISAAC. You left clean laundry on the floor?

PAIGE. I don't do laundry anymore.

ISAAC. It looks like a fucking squat in here. I can't find a rag. I need a rag. Why aren't they where they're supposed to be?

PAIGE. Use a shirt.

ISAAC. I NEED A RAG.

PAIGE. (*Throwing a T-shirt at him.*) USE A SHIRT. IT DOESN'T MATTER!

Isaac tries to take Arnold's makeup off with the T-shirt. Paige is disappointed.

What? No. It took me all morning to do that face.

ARNOLD. (*A little hurt by Isaac's rough wiping.*) Err.

ISAAC. Sorry.

Isaac goes to get some Crisco.

Where's the Crisco?

PAIGE. You want to make a stir-fry?

ISAAC. To take that shit off his face.

HIR

by Taylor Mac

3M, 1W

Somewhere in the suburbs, Isaac has returned from the wars to help take care of his ailing father, only to discover a household in revolt. The insurgent: his mom. Liberated from an oppressive marriage, with Isaac's newly out transgender sibling as her ally, she's on a crusade to dismantle the patriarchy. But in Taylor Mac's sly, subversive comedy, annihilating the past doesn't always free you from it.

"... sensational—in all senses of the word... [an] audacious and uproarious black comedy... Mac has his own gloriously skewed vision of the toxins fouling the American family from within, and in its avowedly loopy way HIR reflects current concerns about the decline of the middle class, as well as the trauma war veterans endure. ...brilliant writing..."
—The New York Times

"[HIR] harks back to a time when politically driven narratives were the rule, not the exception. HIR has a lot of ideas—necessary ideas, especially when it comes to flinging open closets in the 'trans' world... [and] the show is saved from potential proselytizing by Mac's awareness that his arguments have to grow in complexity in order for his characters to grow."
—The New Yorker

"... exuberant radicalism may not come as a complete surprise to fans of Taylor Mac's previous work... But in HIR, the boundary-violating genderqueer playwright sets it within the relatively traditional form of a four-character, single-set domestic drama. The result is a dizzying theatrical Tilt-a-Whirl... Patently metaphorical and threaded with nervy satire, HIR at times suggests a modern inversion of David Rabe's 1971 Sticks and Bones... It has a ringing voice all its own, however, and formidable broad-mindedness in its sympathies (and its jabs)."
—Time Out (New York)

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