

LOOSE CANON

SIX SHORT PLAYS BY

BRIAN RENO

AND

**GABRIEL VEGA
WEISSMAN**



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PLAY SERVICE
INC.

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Dedicated to Moira and Robert Reno
✧
Rosa and Andrew Weissman

LOOSE CANON had its world premiere at the Scranton Shakespeare Festival (Michael Bradshaw Flynn, Artistic Director) on July 17th, 2015. It was directed by Logan Reed. The company was comprised of Becky Baumwoll, Grant Chamberlin, Cynthia Nesbit, Todd Rizley, Tamara Sevunts, and Daniel Tepper.

LOOSE CANON was produced at the New York International Fringe Festival (Nicole Dancel, Producer) on August 16th, 2015. It was directed by Logan Reed. The scenic and prop designs were by Riw Rakkulchon, the costume design was by Ntokozo F. Kunene, the lighting design was by Zach Blane, and the sound design was by Zack McKenna. The stage manager was Valerie Insardi. The company was comprised of Becky Baumwoll, Grant Chamberlin, Cynthia Nesbit, Todd Rizley, Tamara Sevunts, and Daniel Tepper.

LOOSE CANON was subsequently produced at SoHo Playhouse for the New York International Fringe Festival Encore Series (Nicole Dancel and Showgofa Hamraz, Producers) on October 19th, 2015. It was directed by Logan Reed. The scenic and prop designs were by Riw Rakkulchon, the costume design was by Ntokozo F. Kunene, the lighting design was by Zach Blane, and the sound design was by Emma Wilk. The stage manager was Valerie Insardi. The company was comprised of Grant Chamberlin, Cynthia Nesbit, Todd Rizley, Tamara Sevunts, Daniel Tepper, and Alli Trussell.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The playwrights would like to thank:

Mary Jo and Ted Shen for sponsoring the first public reading as well as the company from that reading: Melis Aker, Greg Brostom, Kyle Cameron, Holly Chou, Alexa Chryssos, Raviv Ullman, and Sophie Lewis.

Michael Bradshaw Flynn and the Scranton Shakespeare Festival.

Our company and designers from the Scranton and New York City productions as well as those behind the scenes: Nicole Dancel and Showgofa Hamraz, Samantha Kindler, Lisa Goldberg, Lily Robinson, Anna Haczkiwicz, Leah DeGruchy, and Katherine Banos.

Logan Reed for helming the first productions and teaching us so much about these plays.

AUTHORS' NOTE

Loose Canon was written largely as an exploration of language and different styles of playwriting through the ages. The plays in this collection were conceived with great admiration for the playwrights being parodied, and with a desire to investigate how their distinct styles permeate contemporary theater. They are not meant to insult or deride. Familiarity with the playwrights on whose work *Loose Canon* is based is not obligatory, but investigating those playwrights will only enrich your production.

NOTE ON CASTING

Loose Canon was developed with a company of six actors—three male and three female—in mind. However, it can be produced for a bigger company; role doubling is not essential. Similarly, the roles can be cast with an uneven gender split, with actors of all shapes, sizes, races, and gender identities. These roles are for everyone.

With regard to the characters in “The El Taqueria”: While the characters are specifically not Hispanic, they can be played by anyone. Please do not avoid casting Latinx actors in these roles.

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THE ELMAE

(Inspired by the works of Euripides)

CHARACTERS

JASON

&

CHORUS:

CHORUS LEADER

TIRESIAS

CASSANDRA

HECTOR

HELEN

SETTING

A suburban Chuck E. Cheese's. 1996.

It is Jason's 5th birthday party.
The party guests make up the Chorus.

THE ELMAE

The Chorus enters led by the Chorus Leader, who stands in the center. They are wearing elaborate masks made out of papier mâché, macaroni, and other arts and crafts supplies. When they finish taking their positions, they remove the masks.

CHORUS LEADER.

It is January of 1996. Christmas is but two weeks passed.
Gloom has again sunk its blunt talons into our wearied souls.
And it is now, in this melancholy,
That we gather in this dilapidated Chuck E. Cheese's
To celebrate our friend Jason's birthday.

CHORUS.

Oh the holidays. Trees indoors, stockings hung over fires,
The sweet, sweet taste of cookies and candies and Jelly Bellys.

HELEN.

Only days ago did fine aromas drift from our mothers' kitchens,
Dishes brought forth from their holiday conviviality.

HECTOR.

And see our fathers, who often stay too long a' work,
Their keys jangling as they enter with a tray of Ferrero Rocher.

CHORUS.

But that was the holidays and the holidays are no more.

CASSANDRA.

And our fathers come home,
Moments before bedtime, just long enough to
Perfume us with whiskey, bar nuts, and despair.

CHORUS LEADER.

Jason's birthday is a trying birthday,
For we've all just received our presents not but a week ago,
And now have to watch as our parents hand over

More presents that should have been ours,
Placing them into the lap of that dough-faced fool.

CHORUS.

It's a sham.

CHORUS LEADER.

The tokens have all been slotted and the tickets redeemed,
HELEN.

The Skee balls have been shot

TIRESIAS.

And the moles have all been whacked.

CHORUS LEADER.

The cake, Costco-bought and soggy,

Has been de-flamed and consumed.

It is now time to put on our cheery facade

And watch Jason open his gifts.

Jason steps out.

JASON.

Welcome, Friends, and behold, as I take each of your perfectly
Wrapped, tinsel, tailored parcels and... just tear 'em up.

He begins to unwrap presents.

CHORUS LEADER.

A 96-color Crayola kit is essential to an emerging
Kindergartner, but lacking slush gray, sludge brown,

And dirty white we are incapable of completing

Our winter scenes coloring books.

It's useless.

CHORUS.

Useless.

JASON.

Many thanks, Cassandra. Now I can replace my nubs!

I wonder what this could be?

He begins to open another gift.

Splendid, a Playskool Toolkit! Thanks, Helen.

CHORUS LEADER.

Helen, were you given a Playskool Toolkit for Christmas?

She shakes her head no.

CHORUS.

Typical.

CHORUS LEADER.

Mom buys a wondrous gift for someone else's rugrat,
And shafts poor Helen with a "So You Think You Can Read"
Deck of flashcards.

CHORUS.

We are not interested in clearance-bin stocking stuffers.
We want gifts that will prepare us for our future.

HECTOR.

How can a man protect his hearth and home without a
Nerf Max Force BallZooka?

HELEN.

Without an Easy-Bake Oven, how can a woman learn to make
Peach cobbler with a lightbulb?

*Jason picks up a present wrapped in gorgeous, ornate wrapping
paper.*

JASON.

What's this? There's no note, no card...

*Jason unwraps a Tickle Me Elmo. The Chorus gasps. Beat.
Tiresias takes a step out.*

TIRESIAS.

What is it?

CHORUS.

Oh, Tiresias, if only you could see...

It's the greatest toy ever to be had.

A Tickle Me Elmo.

No one, rich or poor, gifted or stunted, could

Get one this Christmas.

His soft red fur invited you to rub his tummy—

But if you even get close to tickling him...

TIRESIAS.

I know what a Tickle Me Elmo is!

CHORUS LEADER.

Poor Tiresias. Born without the gift of sight.

Lives above *Spanakopia!* The sketchy, grade-B

Greek dinner theater on the south side of town.

TIRESIAS.

I can hear you!

And though my eyes might fail me, my sight does not.

LOOSE CANON

by Brian Reno and Gabriel Vega Weissman

3M, 3W (doubling, flexible casting)

From Molière in IKEA to Chekhov in a Taco Bell, this series of short comedies satirizes the world of the American consumer in the style of canonical playwrights. It's a walk through history... if history were a strip mall.

THE ELMÆ. A child receives the most desired birthday present of the year—a Tickle Me Elmo. Chaos and discord descend upon the party as the children vie for a chance to tickle the Elmo. (3 men, 3 women)

THE PERSEVERATORS. A trip to IKEA tests the friendship of two young men, as a disagreement over interior design becomes a battle of wit in rhyming couplets. (2 men, 1 woman)

PEANUTS & CRACKER JACK. A young couple attends a baseball game, where foul balls, a bombastic hot dog hawker, and overpriced Cracker Jack give their on-the-rocks relationship the jolt it needs. (1 man, 2 women)

UPRIGHT & LOCKED. Claustrophobia and confusion overcome a woman on an airplane. The mysterious voice making inflight announcements only exacerbates her confusion. (1 woman, 1 n/s)

THE MOST LAMENTABLE COMEDIE OF MOIRA AND ROSA. Two women are fired from their posts at an Amazon warehouse for stealing, but their criminal motives were honorable: to post honest online reviews. (1 man, 2 women)

THE EL TAQUERIA. A failing family-owned Tex-Mex franchise in the Berkshires is facing foreclosure, but the three sisters in charge are oblivious. Their estranged brother returns to make them face facts. (2 men, 3 women)

"... madcap hilarity... a fantastic example of the versatility within the historical canon."

—Theasy.com

"... an immensely intelligent and entertaining piece for any sort of theater lover..."

—Charged.fm

"LOOSE CANON bridges the knowledge of a theatre history class with the raucous fun of sketch comedy. ... Literate without being pretentious, funny without being dumb, LOOSE CANON is a delightfully fun time."

—NYTheatreNow.com

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