

RED SPEEDO

BY LUCAS HNATH



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RED SPEEDO
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RED SPEEDO had its New York premiere at New York Theatre Workshop (Jim Nicola, Artistic Director; Jeremy Blocker, Managing Director), opening on March 3, 2016. It was directed by Lileana Blain-Cruz. The scenic design was by Riccardo Hernandez, the costume design was by Montana Blanco, the lighting design was by Yi Zhao, the sound design was by Matt Tierney, the fight direction was by Thomas Schall, and the stage manager was Terri K. Kohler. The cast was as follows:

RAY Alex Breaux
PETER Lucas Caleb Rooney
COACH Peter Jay Fernandez
LYDIA Zoë Winters

RED SPEEDO was originally produced by the Studio Theatre (David Muse, Artistic Director; Keith Alan Baker, Managing Director), Washington, D.C. in September 2013. It was directed by Lila Neugebauer. The set design was by Mimi Lien, the lighting design was by Dan Covey, the costumes were by Meghan Raham, the sound design was by Christopher Baine, the fight direction was by Rob Hunter, the dramaturg was Adrien-Alice Hansel, and the production stage manager was T. Scott Wooten. The cast was as follows:

RAY Frank Boyd
PETER Thomas Jay Ryan
COACH Harry A. Winter
LYDIA Laura C. Harris

SPECIAL THANKS

To the actors: Haskell King, Marianna McClellan, David Ross, Paul Niebanck, Guy Boyd, Davy Raphaely, Thomas Jay Ryan, Frank Boyd, Laura C. Harris, Harry Winter, Alex Breaux, Peter Jay Fernandez, Lucas Caleb Rooney, Zoë Winters.

To the directors: Linsay Firman, Lila Neugebauer, James MacDonald, Lileana Blain-Cruz.

To the dramaturgs: Adrien-Alice Hansel, Aaron Malkin.

To the theaters: Sara Garonzik, Philadelphia Theatre Company; David Muse, Studio Theatre; Jim Nicola and Linda Chapman, New York Theatre Workshop.

And also: New Dramatists, Jason Padgett, Val Day, Thomas Schall, and Caryl Churchill.

CHARACTERS

RAY—male, late 20s, any ethnicity

PETER—male, late 30s, any ethnicity (same as Ray)

LYDIA—female, 30s, any ethnicity

COACH—male, 50s, any ethnicity

SETTING

In a natatorium.

Present, more or less.

One month before the summer Olympics.

A NOTE ABOUT THE POOL

The setting of the play is a natatorium with the edge of the stage representing the edge of the pool. Different productions have handled this design challenge differently. In the New York production, New York Theatre Workshop built an enormous tank with a clear plexiglass front so that you could see into the pool. It was roughly the width and length of a single lane, and it allowed our lead actor to make his entrance from inside the pool. A prior production at Theatre Exile in Philadelphia made something simpler—essentially a trough at the edge of the stage. It created the illusion of a pool and was deep enough that during the play’s final fight, Ray could plunge Peter’s head fully underwater.

However, the world premiere of the play at Studio Theatre featured no pool at all, only the suggestion that the edge of the stage was the edge of the pool. But no water.

All options are viable.

What the pool accomplishes, in addition to giving the production an element of spectacle, is that it allows the climatic fight of the play to go to a very dangerous place with an attempted drowning.

In a production that does not build a pool (or at minimum a trough filled with water), an alternate approach to the play’s climatic fight is necessary as it would feel a bit silly to have Ray attempt to drown Peter without any water. For that reason, I’ve included at the end of the script an alternate description of a fight that does not use a pool.

SCRIPT GRAMMAR

Ellipses

A beat. A brief moment to think, to process; sometimes shared, passing back and forth between two or more characters, perhaps a stand-off, perhaps traded glances.

Line Break

Such as:

RAY.

I know you're right I fucked up

but but but

like you were talking about

This space between lines implies a breath. Otherwise, where there is no “breath,” move through the lines without air.

Dash

If I had no worries about readers being able to make sense of the play on a first read, I'd have written a line such as:

It's a sacrifice—like a monk, like a—he's a—this is it all he has all he can do tried to work in the outside world, but that was a—he has no skills—He can't function, can't function because he devoted everything to

as:

It's a sacrifice like a monk, like a he's a this is it all he has all he can do tried to work in the outside world, but that was a he has no skills He can't function, can't function because he devoted everything to

In other words, the dash has no breath, no break. Run it through.

Other Considerations

Fluidity is important. There are many sections of this play that consist of a dialogue of sentence fragments. These lines want to connect seamlessly, no air in between. Doesn't necessarily mean that it's speed-read. But it must be fluid, not staccato.

There's something simply un-American about this. This is about values, about culture, it's about who we define ourselves to be.

—Joe Biden,
on the topic of performance enhancement drugs

*Anything you want, you got it.
Anything you need, you got it.
Anything at all, you got it.
Baby.*

—Roy Orbison

RED SPEEDO

The set: It's an indoor swimming pool at a gym. Everything is tiled. Everything has that watery blue glow that indoor pools have. The edge of the stage is the edge of pool, and there is water there.

And maybe we can smell chlorine.

Enter Ray: a swimmer. He wears a red Speedo. For the entire play, he only ever wears a Speedo.

Also, he has a tattoo—a big one. The tattoo is of a sea serpent. It begins on his back; it covers almost his entire back. And then the tail of the serpent runs down his backside and wraps around his left leg. It's ridiculous; it's permanent.

And enter Coach and Peter.

And a loud air horn sounds—the sound that sounds when a race starts.

Scene 1

(Ray eats from a bag of baby carrots.)

(Peter speaks to Coach on behalf of Ray.)

PETER.

A man. This man—Here is a man who is nothing short of amazing. He has devoted his entire life to swimming.

At age 4 he took his first swimming lesson,

age 8 he won his first swim competition,

age 10 he won his first national swim competition,

years pass he's working his way up the ladder,

trying to make it to the Olympics,

and yeah, there was a year or so where he spent time roaming the desert in a van, he was on a

RAY.
spiritual quest

PETER.
took some time and space for himself,
meditated on life and its what-have-you,
but then he came back
and in the years since then he has
consistently worked hard to—skyrocketing, through the ranks—you,
Coach, there for the entire journey, helping him hone his skills—and,
Ray, excelling under your—and the sacrifices he's made—

Here is a man who once got into a car accident, no fault of his own,
a truck slammed into the side of his vehicle, broke two of his ribs.
Ambulance takes him to the hospital,
doctors bandage him, bind up his body, reset the ribs,
all the while, didn't even take any anesthetic,
didn't want to poison his body with—and he should've been at home,
he should've been resting,
but the team had a meet,
and he didn't want to miss it and let you down,
and he took off those bandages and he swam.

And when he launched off the block, his whole torso hit the water
at an incredible—the the the the sheer force with which he hit the
surface of the water, it must have—I can't imagine

RAY.
I have a high tolerance for pain

PETER.
placed first in that race. Had to rush him to a hospital immediately
after—the impact of the water, fractured more bones, broke a third
rib when he hit the—three broken ribs—did for it you, did it for
the club, the team, the—

Here is a man who, in the past 5 months,
twice defeated Michael Phelps in pre-Olympic trials.
Defeated Cullen Jones—I don't remember how many times he—
Once even defeated Ryan Lochte in freestyle, Ray's weakest stroke.

He works so hard.
He practices 6 hours a day in the pool,

does weights for 2 hours,
every day, never misses a practice or meet, right?

he spends so much of his life in the water that his fingers are—the
skin is permanently shriveled, peels off, in chunks

RAY.
's not that bad

PETER.
calcification in his brow-line from the goggles, giving him these
intense migraines that last for days

RAY.
I can put my hand in a flame for up to 32 seconds without flinching

PETER.
... and when he isn't swimming or practicing,
he's teaching children how to swim,
or he's scooping crap out of the kiddie pool,
or he's teaching senior-citizen water aerobics.

Think of everything he has done for this club and your—

And he gives to charity, he cares about animals and their charities,
dog charities and—animals, he—

Women love him. Everyone loves him, but women, *women* love
him the most of—and yes, he does love women back why shouldn't
he—so many women, but what's wrong with

RAY.
they just like me so much

PETER.
he's young and

RAY.
people say I have a lot to offer

PETER.
now he's no scholar

RAY.
nope

PETER.
didn't do well at school, couldn't—devoted all his time to this so completely devoted his—sure he could've tried to go to college *could've* but he put you and the club and the team first, made himself into a swimming machine, a body that's built for one purpose, and that means maybe in other areas he's not so—but this is the sacrifice he's made. It's a sacrifice—like a monk, like a—he's a—this is it all he has all he can do tried to work in the outside world, but that was a—he has no skills—He can't function, can't function because he devoted everything to

I mean, look at him. You know what I—and yes, I am his brother, and yes, he is my flesh and blood, my little brother, and yes, I do care for him, quite a bit.

But I'm not just his brother,
I'm also his lawyer.
And as his legal representative, I am here,
speaking to you the eve before the qualifying trial for the Olympics,
he's destined, he's ready, he will no doubt qualify tomorrow,
his times are—it's not a question. Right?
Correct me if I'm

COACH.
Yes, that is

PETER.
easy, and there you are—he's a swimmer on the Olympic team, and I have to think that's beneficial, and—this is what every coach wants, needs for—it's why you do what you do—worked hard, and Ray's worked hard, and then you get this dipshit-what's-its-name

RAY.
Tad

PETER.
Tad?

RAY.
Tad

PETER.
his real name—?

RAY.
yeah

PETER.
so we've got this "Tad," who was found with an Igloo cooler full of
some sort of performance enhancing whatchamafuckit

COACH.
to be clear

PETER.
yes

COACH.
the cooler was found in the club refrigerator

PETER.
and Ray saw him

RAY.
I didn't

COACH.
he heard

RAY.
I heard from someone that the drugs were Tad's

PETER.
so Ray heard from someone who heard from someone that the
drugs are Tad's

COACH.
Ray knows who said, just doesn't want to say

RED SPEEDO

by Lucas Hnath

3M, 1W

Ray's swum his way to the eve of the Olympic trials. If he makes the team, he'll get a deal with Speedo. If he gets a deal with Speedo, he'll never need a real job. So when someone's stash of performance-enhancing drugs is found in the locker room fridge, threatening the entire team's Olympic fate, Ray has to crush the rumors or risk losing everything. A sharp and stylish play about swimming, survival of the fittest, and the American dream of a level playing field—or of leveling the field yourself.

"... [A] remarkable feat... a taut, incisive drama... [Hnath] has a wonderfully inventive theatrical mind. ... With fragmented dialogue that often comes at you like artillery fire, RED SPEEDO recalls the (good) work of David Mamet, distilled and compressed. But Mr. Hnath's voice and style are fundamentally his own. There's an elemental, stylized simplicity to his work that focuses attention on the meanings behind the matters at hand. The characters in RED SPEEDO are palpably, at times movingly, human in their complexity and weakness... but as the play gathers steam it broadens out to become a subtle indictment of the ethos that insists that winning is everything."

—The New York Times

"... Hnath raises hugely important questions about our society and the occasionally perverse behavior it encourages. What is the wisdom of basing success on one's ability to be exceptional? What does 'giving 110 percent' really mean? Can we justify cheating when we feel that the game is already rigged against us? ... [A] troubling and truthful play."

—TheaterMania.com

"... a brutal examination of the cravenness of the modern sport scene in particular and America in general. ... Hnath constructs an intricate web of needs and counter-needs with the four players each battling and scheming to come out on top... Lurking underneath the surface waters of the plot is a bitter indictment of our winning-at-all-costs culture. ... this depth charge of a play hits you where it counts."

—CulturalWeekly.com

Also by Lucas Hnath
THE CHRISTIANS
DEATH TAX
ISAAC'S EYE
and others

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