



# MERCURY FUR

BY PHILIP RIDLEY



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



MERCURY FUR  
Copyright © 2018, Philip Ridley

All Rights Reserved

**CAUTION:** Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of MERCURY FUR is subject to payment of a royalty. It is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and of all countries covered by the International Copyright Union (including the Dominion of Canada and the rest of the British Commonwealth), and of all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention, the Berne Convention, and of all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations. All rights, including without limitation professional/amateur stage rights, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all other forms of mechanical, electronic and digital reproduction, transmission and distribution, such as CD, DVD, the Internet, private and file-sharing networks, information storage and retrieval systems, photocopying, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved. Particular emphasis is placed upon the matter of readings, permission for which must be secured from the Author's agent in writing.

The English language stock and amateur stage performance rights in the United States, its territories, possessions and Canada for MERCURY FUR are controlled exclusively by DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., 440 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. No professional or nonprofessional performance of the Play may be given without obtaining in advance the written permission of DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC., and paying the requisite fee.

Inquiries concerning all other rights should be addressed to Knight Hall Agency Ltd, 7 Mallow Street, London, EC1Y 8RQ. Attn: Charlotte Knight.

**SPECIAL NOTE**

Anyone receiving permission to produce MERCURY FUR is required to give credit to the Author as sole and exclusive Author of the Play on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears, including printed or digital materials for advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production thereof. Please see your production license for font size and typeface requirements.

Be advised that there may be additional credits required in all programs and promotional material. Such language will be listed under the "Additional Billing" section of production licenses. It is the licensee's responsibility to ensure any and all required billing is included in the requisite places, per the terms of the license.

**SPECIAL NOTE ON SONGS AND RECORDINGS**

Dramatists Play Service, Inc. neither holds the rights to nor grants permission to use any songs or recordings mentioned in the Play. Permission for performances of copyrighted songs, arrangements or recordings mentioned in this Play is not included in our license agreement. The permission of the copyright owner(s) must be obtained for any such use. For any songs and/or recordings mentioned in the Play, other songs, arrangements, or recordings may be substituted provided permission from the copyright owner(s) of such songs, arrangements or recordings is obtained; or songs, arrangements or recordings in the public domain may be substituted.

For Rod Hall

*I love you so much  
I could burst into flames.*

*Am I a man who dreamt of being a butterfly,  
or am I a butterfly dreaming that I am a man?*

Zhuang Zhou

*What a terrible world.  
Sometimes I wonder if I'll get out of it alive.*

W. C. Fields

*Sometimes brutality is the only antidote to sorrow.*

David Leavitt

MERCURY FUR was originally produced by Paines Plough and the Drum Theatre, Plymouth, on February 10, 2005. The production subsequently transferred to the Menier Chocolate Factory, London, on March 2, 2005. It was directed by John Tiffany, the set and costume designs were by Laura Hopkins, the lighting design was by Natasha Chivers, the original music and sound design was by Nick Powell, and the fight director was Terry King. The cast was as follows:

ELLIOT .....	Ben Wishaw
DARREN .....	Robert Boulter
NAZ .....	Shane Zaza
PARTY PIECE (PLYMOUTH) .....	Navneet Mohan
PARTY PIECE (LONDON) .....	Prem and Previ Gami
LOLA .....	Harry Kent
SPINX .....	Fraser Ayres
DUCHESS .....	Sophie Stanton
PARTY GUEST .....	Dominic Hall

## **CHARACTERS**

ELLIOT

DARREN

NAZ

PARTY PIECE

LOLA

SPINX

DUCHESS

PARTY GUEST

# MERCURY FUR

*A derelict flat in a derelict estate in the East End of London. Layers of peeling wallpaper (many cleaner patches where framed photos once hung), several pieces of old furniture (armchairs, sideboard, shelves, etc.), well-worn carpet and smashed ornaments. Detritus and dust cover everything. As well as the front door there are doors to balcony, bedroom, and bathroom. All this, however, cannot presently be seen as, with the windows covered with plywood, the flat is in darkness.*

*Footsteps outside front door.*

*Slight pause.*

*The front door is forcibly opened with a crowbar and Elliot enters. He is nineteen years old and wearing a zip-up, hooded jacket, jeans, and trainers. He is carrying a large (and very full) sports bag and a lit torch. He walks with a limp.*

*Elliot tries light switch. Nothing happens.*

*He continues looking round flat with torch.*

DARREN. *(Calling, off.)* Elliot? Ell? Where the hell are you?

*Elliot goes to front door.*

ELLIOT. Where the hell are you?

DARREN. *(Calling, off.)* Dunno.

ELLIOT. Can you see the dead dog?

DARREN. *(Calling, off.)* ...Yeah.

ELLIOT. Step over the dead dog. Turn left. ...Here!

*Elliot waves torch.*

DARREN. *(Calling, off.)* Yeah, yeah!

*Elliot comes back into flat and continues looking round.*

*Darren enters. He is sixteen years old and wearing a zip-up, hooded jacket, jeans, and trainers. He is carrying a torch and two large (and very full) sports bags. A broom lies across the top of one bag. He is struggling and fumbling.*

Could get lost for-fucking-ever out there.

ELLIOT. Shouldn't dawdle behind, then, should you.

DARREN. It's *you!* Rushing off all the bloody time!

*Darren drops torch.*

Shit! Fuck!

*Darren picks torch up.*

*Elliot glares his torch at Darren.*

What?

ELLIOT. We've got a lot to get ready, Darren.

DARREN. I know that, Elliot.

*Elliot inspects the plywood on a window.*

*He removes it with crowbar.*

*Late afternoon sunlight is revealed.*

*Darren is hovering uneasily.*

ELLIOT. You bloody helping or what?

DARREN. Yeah, but...who *are* we?

ELLIOT. I *told* you who we fucking were.

DARREN. When?

ELLIOT. When we parked the fucking car.

*Slight pause.*

Do you *remember* parking the fucking car?

DARREN. What d'you think I am?

*Slight pause.*

...No.

ELLIOT. Darren, listen to me. I'm going to ask you a question. I'm asking this question because you've been acting like a kitten after a twirl in the microwave—no, no, let me finish. You've been acting like a kitten after a twirl in the microwave all afternoon and this microwaved feline behaviour is eating up time faster than



a peckish piranha on a freshly aborted foetus. Do I make myself cunting clear?

DARREN. ...Yeah.

ELLIOT. You ready for the question?

DARREN. Yeah.

ELLIOT. Have you eaten a butterfly?

DARREN. No!

ELLIOT. I'll be more annoyed if you lie to me.

DARREN. I have *not* eaten a butterfly.

*Slight pause.*

...Not a *whole* one.

ELLIOT. Jesus!

DARREN. One wing! That's all!

ELLIOT. *When* did you eat it? Eh? As soon as I left the flat this morning, I bet. Soon as my back was fucking turned.

DARREN. I waited for the car to drive off first.

ELLIOT. Don't get clever. You *promised* me, Darren.

DARREN. I'm sorry.

ELLIOT. No more butterflies behind my back. You *swore!*

DARREN. I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Jesus!

ELLIOT. What butterfly was it?

DARREN. Oh...one of the new ones.

ELLIOT. *What* new one?...Darren!

DARREN. I'm trying to remember!

ELLIOT. What *colour* was it, for fuck's sake?

DARREN. Green! No. Gold! With blue flecks. Or was it red?

ELLIOT. What did it *do* to you?

DARREN. Famous people...political leaders...killing them.

ELLIOT. Assassination. You ate a red with silver stripes.

DARREN. Just a wing! *A wing!*

ELLIOT. How were you fucking assassinated?

DARREN. I wasn't.

ELLIOT. *Who* did you assassinate, then?

DARREN. No one.

ELLIOT. Well, *someone* was fucking assassinated *some-fucking-how!*

DARREN. I *saw* someone assassinated. Okay?

ELLIOT. Who?

DARREN. He...he was sitting in the back of a car. In some city—  
Don't tell me, don't tell me...Dallas! His head went splat.

ELLIOT. Kennedy.

DARREN. Yeah!

ELLIOT. Jesus Christ, Darren, you don't get no Dallas splat-head  
Kennedy on a single fucking butterfly wing.

DARREN. You've never eaten one, how the fuck d'you know?

ELLIOT. It's my *job* to fucking know! You'd be lucky to get some third-  
world Muslim cleric machine-gunned in a mosque on a single fucking  
butterfly wing. It was a whole butterfly, wasn't it?

DARREN. No!

ELLIOT. Where's the other fucking wing, then, eh? Come on! Show  
me!

*Starts frisking Darren.*

Show me, you nigger-Paki-wop-spic-chinkie-Muslim-dago-Christian-  
cunt!

DARREN. Alright, alright. It was a whole butterfly, for fuck's sake.

ELLIOT. Bastard!

DARREN. But it was small.

ELLIOT. *Small?*

DARREN. A baby.

ELLIOT. A *baby*? You don't get no *baby* butterflies, Darren. There  
are no seven fucking ages of a fucking butterfly. A butterfly is. A  
butterfly ain't. That's its lot.

DARREN. They must have a cunting childhood.

ELLIOT. It's called a cater-cunting-pillarhood!

DARREN. Alright, alright, I don't wanna bloody bolligie lesson.

ELLIOT. "Bloody bolligie"? You can't even speak properly, you

worthless pile of cretinous cum! Jesus! Why are we here, Darren?

DARREN. What d'you mean?

ELLIOT. What? Are we? *Doing* here?

DARREN. We're looking for a place.

ELLIOT. A place for what?

DARREN. I'm not fucking stupid!

ELLIOT. A place for *what*, Darren?

DARREN. A place to have a party!

ELLIOT. And it's going to start in about—

*Checks wristwatch.*

Ooo, an hour give or take a few minutes. Which means...?

DARREN. Which means...we...ain't got much time to get things ready.

ELLIOT. That's right. And if we don't get things ready in time, you know what that means?

DARREN. It...means...we...

ELLIOT. It means Spinx will be pissed off.

DARREN. We don't want that.

ELLIOT. No. We fucking don't. Because Spinx has a habit of slicing people's eyelids off when he is not a happy bunny. Right?...Right?

DARREN. Right!

ELLIOT. So I do *not* need you dawdling round like some petrol-bombed paraplegic when you should be helping me keep Spinx in total contented bunniness.

DARREN. I *am* helping!

ELLIOT. I've got news for you. You're not! Fucking butterfly brain.

DARREN. It's worn off!

ELLIOT. Worn off? I've seen gang-raped toddlers act with more alacrity.

DARREN. I *am* acting with ala—ala—

ELLIOT. Alacrity! It means bright as a polished bullet up a napalmed arsehole.

# MERCURY FUR

## by Philip Ridley

7 men, 1 woman

In a society ravaged by warring gangs and a hallucinogenic-drug epidemic, Elliot and Darren, under the sway of the ruthless Spinx, throw parties for rich clients in abandoned apartment buildings—parties that help guests act out their darkest, most sinister fantasies. As the teenage brothers prepare for the latest festivities, some unexpected guests threaten the balance of the world they have created in the midst of this dystopian nightmare. *MERCURY FUR* is a terrifying, yet tender, look at just how far people will go to protect those they love the most.

*“A play whose extreme luridness is matched, and even trumped, by its intelligence, MERCURY FUR is sensational in pretty much every sense of the word. ...a penetrating analysis of how a culture shaped by violence transforms its inhabitants. ...a profoundly moral play, in that it asks how we define morality under extreme duress... Such morality melds with and blurs the sentimental streak of this play, which has a tight structure and exactly echoing imagery that Ibsen might appreciate... [MERCURY FUR] leaves you moved, muddled and gasping for air.”* —**The New York Times**

*“It’s rare that a theatrical piece has the power to create real visceral dread and stomach-churning queasiness so compellingly and unapologetically. ... raw, provocative, unforgettable...”* —**TheaterMania.com**

*“... one hell of a play. ...nonstop, full throttle, truly terrifying theater...”*  
—**Theasy.com**

**Also by Philip Ridley**  
RADIANT VERMIN  
TENDER NAPALM  
VINCENT RIVER  
and others

**DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.**

ISBN 978-0-8222-3602-3



9 780822 236023