



THIS DAY FORWARD

BY NICKY SILVER



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THIS DAY FORWARD
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THIS DAY FORWARD was presented by the Vineyard Theatre (Douglas Aibel and Sarah Stern, Co-Artistic Directors), opening on November 20, 2016. It was directed by Mark Brokaw; the set design was by Allen Moyer; the costume design was by Kaye Voyce; the lighting design was by David Lander; the music and sound design were by David Van Tiegham; the production stage manager was Cynthia Cahill. The cast, in order of speaking, was as follows:

MARTIN/NOAH Michael Crane
IRENE (1958) Holley Fain
DONALD/LEO Andrew Burnap
MELKA/IRENE (2004) June Gable
EMIL Joe Tippett
MRS. SCHMITT/SHEILA Francesca Faridany

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There are two differences in the text as it appears here and as it was performed in its premiere at the Vineyard Theatre.

In the Vineyard production, in Act I, as Irene tells Martin about going dancing with Emil, we let her sing a single phrase of the song she mentions. And, likewise, at the end of the play Irene summoned Emil by singing the same phrase, now in a manner very fragile and very broken. (She did not say “Hold me...please...closer...closer...”.) We found it helpful to reiterate the piece of music. And both June Gable and Holley Fain, who played Irene old and young, were quite musical. So we let them sing.*

I'd also like to share these thoughts. *THIS DAY FORWARD* proved to be a very difficult proposition! The play is about family and prejudice. (Irene's mother forces her to abandon her love for a man outside her faith. The misery caused by that action is still being felt fifty years later.) But it is also a play about theater—my love of theater at any rate.

I think it's clear (hopefully, it's clear) that Act I is written not just about characters in 1958, but in the style of the era. It should feel very much like a play you could walk in and see at that time. There are no gay people. There's no foul language. There are dizzy ingénues and wily bellhops. And even given that stylistic choice, the act shifts from boulevard comedy to farce. And then in the last moments the mask falls off and violence is revealed. The underbelly of that “reality” rears its head. Keeping the characters real, funny, connected, and still true to the period is a challenge!

Act II is completely different. It should feel like a play you might see right now (or at least in 2004). There are flashbacks and gay people and the first real line of dialogue is “Goddamnit!” We are in a new theatrical landscape.

When I say that the play is also about my love of the theater, I mean it explores these theatrical worlds with affection. Hitting all the right notes while telling a cohesive story was an exciting and tricky proposition! When it worked, by the way, it was thrilling.

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

CHARACTERS

ACT I (1958)

MARTIN, a sweet, bespectacled, bookish man, nice-looking but lacking confidence.

IRENE, his wife. Beautiful, sweet, sunny, feathery, with a slightly dizzy air.

EMIL, perhaps not a genius, but brawny and dashing, with a bit of danger and Brando in him.

DONALD, a sweet, boyish room-service waiter.

MELKA, a bitter hotel maid with a heavy Polish accent, a deep voice and dark red hair.

MRS. SCHMITT, an irate guest at the hotel.

ACT II (2004)

NOAH (played by the same actor as MARTIN), Irene's son. A confident, driven, if conflicted director considering a transition from theater to television.

LEO (played by the same actor as DONALD), a smart but insecure young man, guileless. An aspiring actor.

SHEILA (played by the same actress as MRS. SCHMITT), early 40s. Irene's daughter. A fast-talking, zaftig mother of one. A pushy interior designer who wears too much jewelry.

IRENE (played by the same actress as MELKA), late 60s. A venomous and confused woman with white hair.

EMIL, same as ACT I.

IRENE 1958, same as ACT I.

TIME and PLACE

ACT I

1958. A lovely room at the St. Regis Hotel in New York City.

ACT II

2004. Noah's loft/apartment in the Flatiron district.

THIS DAY FORWARD

ACT I

Scene 1

A light comes up on Martin wearing a tuxedo. He addresses the audience.

MARTIN. It was a beautiful wedding. The weather cooperated and everyone agreed the bride looked lovely. Of course I might be prejudiced because it was *my* wedding, but I don't think so. The room, the wine—the food was excellent—my aunt Janice complained, of course, that her meat was fatty. But that's just who she is. My mother cried, loudly and on cue, my father flirted with the maid of honor, and everyone pretended it *wasn't* embarrassing when my uncle Eliot, who must weigh in excess of three hundred pounds, jitterbugged until it looked like he would collapse, right there, in a Lake Erie puddle of his own sticky sweat. We posed for pictures, bouquets were thrown, garters were caught and then, as people haggled over centerpieces, and assured us that Acapulco is the perfect place for a honeymoon, we made our way to the room, our room, on the twelfth floor... Just me, and Irene, who looked so beautiful, and so completely happy.

Lights come up on a very beautiful, if slightly baroque, hotel room. There is a very elaborate fruit basket on the dresser, an envelope on a night table, and three suitcases in the corner. Irene is there, wearing a lovely, cocktail-length wedding dress, the cinched waist and full skirt tell us the period. She's a dizzy, anxious wreck. As the scene begins, he removes his jacket, bowtie, and cuff links.

IRENE. We have to talk!

MARTIN. You look perfect.

IRENE. Really? I do? You think I do? I don't know. This dress. I mean, I know it's traditional and everything, but it's so—*white*. It's very white. I'm not usually a person who wears white. My mother always says that it washes me out *and* makes me look heavy.

MARTIN. How could *you* look heavy?

IRENE. Oh I could. Really. I used to be fat, very fat. I never told you that. I know. Do you think my not telling you is like lying? I don't think it is. Maybe it is. It's not. I was very, very fat for about six months, in the eighth grade.

MARTIN. You were?

IRENE. Didn't you ever wonder why there are no pictures of me from the eighth grade?

MARTIN. I never noticed.

IRENE. It's because I was fat.

MARTIN. Really?

IRENE. Gigantic.

MARTIN. Well, you're not fat now.

IRENE. I could get fat.

MARTIN. That's alright.

IRENE. I don't mean "as a favor" I meant like, you know, as in "you never know."

MARTIN. I look at you, I can't believe how lucky I—

IRENE. It was a nice reception don't you think? The roast beef was good and the music was nice. I didn't understand that toast really, your old roommate's toast. What's his name? Seth? I guess it went over my head. What did the Latin part mean?

MARTIN. It was French.

IRENE. It was?

MARTIN. "*Il n'y a qu'un bonheur, c'est d'aimer et d'être aimé.*"

IRENE. It's like music.

MARTIN. "There is only one happiness, to love and be loved."

IRENE. He could've said it in English. Is he French?

MARTIN. He's from Bayonne.

IRENE. I took Spanish.

MARTIN. Don't you want to get undressed?

IRENE. What? Here? Now? Really? Now?

MARTIN. It's our wedding night.

IRENE. Oh. Well. No. No, thank you. I don't think so.

MARTIN. (*Gentle.*) Irene.

IRENE. You ordered champagne, didn't you? Maybe we should just wait a little—

MARTIN. I can't. I can't wait. I want to hold you. Feel you, taste you.

IRENE. Really? Do you? Wow. Hmmm. God. You see, the thing is, Martin, the thing is, I don't um, it's not—oh God. Listen to me Martin—

She turns away from him, starting to cry.

I'm sorry.

MARTIN. (*Gentle.*) What is it? What's the matter?

IRENE. Nothing. Really. Nothing. I'm fine. I just, um, I miss Ruffles, I guess, I think. That must be it. Yes. I miss Ruffles.

MARTIN. Your dog?

IRENE. I know you don't like him. But he's a sweet dog, really. He just has to get to know people.

MARTIN. You're nervous.

IRENE. No, no. I miss Ruffles.

MARTIN. It's alright to be nervous. The first time. It's mysterious and strange. But, it'll be fine. Trust me. It'll be beautiful. I know what to do. I've had experience.

IRENE. You have?

MARTIN. Yes.

IRENE. Really?

MARTIN. Not a lot, but yes.

IRENE. Who?

MARTIN. Who what?

IRENE. Who have you had experience with?

MARTIN. Does it matter?

IRENE. Well, I don't know. It depends who on it is. It's not Bonnie Gorse, is it? She's so superior. She walks around like she's better than everyone, just because she drives an Impala.

MARTIN. I don't know who that is.

IRENE. (*Annoyed.*) She was at the wedding.

MARTIN. She was?

IRENE. Purple dress, cerise flowers.

MARTIN. I don't know that word.

IRENE. It's like fuchsia.

MARTIN. Oh.

IRENE. Was it her?

MARTIN. No.

IRENE. Were there lots?

MARTIN. No. Not a lot and no one you know. It doesn't matter. I think we're off on the wrong track a little bit. I just meant I know what to do.

IRENE. It was nice of the hotel to give us this fruit. Don't you think?

MARTIN. I suppose.

IRENE. And so much of it. We're only here one night. We can't take it to Acapulco with us. Well, we could, I suppose, but we shouldn't. Is that a kiwi? I don't think I've ever had a kiwi in my entire—

He interrupts her by taking her in his arms and kissing her, passionately. She doesn't really respond, nor does she push him away. When he breaks—

I have to tell you something.

He kisses her neck repeatedly as the scene continues.

MARTIN. No, you don't.

IRENE. I'm serious. This is important.

MARTIN. (*Kissing her neck.*) It can wait.

IRENE. It can't.

MARTIN. You smell fantastic.

IRENE. I've been trying to tell you all day.

MARTIN. Tell me tomorrow.

IRENE. (*Pulling away.*) Please stop that!

MARTIN. What is it? What's the matter?

IRENE. You'll yell at me.

MARTIN. I won't.

IRENE. I think you might.

MARTIN. Have I ever yelled at you?

IRENE. There's a first time for everything.

MARTIN. (*Good natured.*) Mrs. Resnick—

IRENE. Please don't call me that. That's your mother. Your mother's Mrs. Resnick. I'm Irene.

MARTIN. You'll get used to it.

IRENE. Maybe not.

MARTIN. Let's make love.

IRENE. I have to say this!

MARTIN. Fine. Say it. And then we can be man and wife, the way we're supposed to be.

IRENE. (*Sitting on the bed.*) You're going to be angry. I think you're going to be very, very angry.

MARTIN. (*Joining her.*) Irene, listen to me. I'm your husband and I love you. You can tell me anything. I'm your safe place. Your harbor. A year ago, before we met, I was nothing. A suit of clothes, a haircut. Nothing. And then one night. Do you remember the night? It was me and Carl and you and Beth. You were wearing your pink dress. And there was a moment, this moment at dinner, I remember it. You laughed at something someone said, I don't remember the joke. I remember you. Your laugh. The way you smiled, threw your head back. The way the light shined off of your hair, like a painting. Just a moment. But I knew, I really knew, at that moment that you were it, what I'd been waiting for. I didn't give it a name. I didn't even know that I knew it, then. But I know it now. So whatever it is you want to tell me, whatever you've done,

THIS DAY FORWARD

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3M, 3W

Martin has just married the girl of his dreams. Only moments after their vows, however, Irene reveals that she, in fact, is deeply in love with someone else, a gas station attendant named Emil. To make matters worse, she called Emil during the reception and he's on his way to confront the groom. By the end of Act I, Irene has left Martin to be with her love. Act II is set forty-six years later. Noah, Irene's son, is waiting for his mother to be delivered by the police, having been found disoriented at the airport. We learn from Noah that Martin and Irene did, in fact, end up together. The mystery of how that happened is slowly revealed as Noah grapples with his combative and confused mother, his desperate sister, and Leo, the young man Noah pushes away despite the love between them.

Also by Nicky Silver

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