



EVERYBODY

BY

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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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The world premiere of EVERYBODY was produced by Signature Theatre, New York City (Paige Evans, Artistic Director; Erika Mallin, Executive Director; James Houghton, Founder). It was directed by Lila Neugebauer, the set design was by Laura Jellinek, the costume design was by Gabriel Berry, the lighting design was by Matt Frey, the sound design and original music were by Brandon Wolcott, the choreographer was Raja Feather Kelly, and the production stage manager was Amanda Spooner. The cast was as follows:

USHER/GOD/UNDERSTANDING Jocelyn Bioh
DEATH Marylouise Burke
SOMEBODIES Brooke Bloom, Michael Braun,
Louis Cancelmi, David Patrick Kelly,
Lakisha Michelle May
GIRL Lilyana Tiare Cornell
LOVE Chris Perfetti

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

This play is written for a company of nine performers of varying generations and gender and ethnic identities.

The exact breakdown of roles should vary from performance to performance via lottery or some other element of chance.

In order of appearance:

USHER/GOD/UNDERSTANDING

played by an actual usher—or at least it should initially seem so

DEATH

played by the oldest actor in the company

SOMEBODIES

played by five actors until they become something else

EVERYBODY

played by a Somebody
as determined by chance

FRIENDSHIP/ STRENGTH/KINSHIP/
BEAUTY/COUSIN/MIND/STUFF/SENSES

played by remaining Somebodies
as determined by chance

GIRL/TIME

played by a young child stolen from the audience—or at least
it should initially seem so

LOVE

played by an audience member—or at least it should initially seem so

A, B, C, & D

voiced by Somebodies not playing Everybody
(possibly pre-recorded)

For James Houghton, 1948–2016.

EVERYBODY

I. HERE BEGINNETH A TREATISE ON HOW SOMEONE OR SOMETHING—GOD?—SENDETH DEATH TO SUMMON EVERY CREATURE TO COME AND ACCOUNT FOR THEIR LIVES IN THE WORLD, PRESENTED IN THE MANNER OF A MORALITY PLAY

An Usher enters and doesn't immediately worry about being heard.

USHER. If you can hear me, clap once.

Claps.

If you can hear me, clap twice.

Claps.

If you can hear me, clap three times.

Claps, repeats ritual as needed.

Hi. Thanks. Thank you all for coming. If we can all focus for a second, I want to go over a few things before the show starts. First, please turn off your cell phones. I'll wait until it is clear to me that all cell phones are off...

Beat.

And don't be embarrassed if you forgot. It happens. And we've accounted for this exact moment in our runtime, so you're not inconveniencing anyone... We just don't want you to be one of those people whose phone accidentally goes off in the middle of the show and then everyone kind of whips around on you and turns on you and you're suddenly feeling pulled out of the group experience and that's not great. And we all know that there's almost One in Every Show... Especially here, so...

Beat.

Also, interesting fact: If your phone is on “Do Not Disturb” or “moon mode,” it is actually *not off*. In fact, it’s not even on “silent,” because if someone were to call you twice within a short period of time, your phone would think there was some emergency and sort of override the “Do Not Disturb” function and actually...well, disturb. This is one of many features that make our “smartphones” so smart, but it is also why a lot of phones still go off in theatres almost half a century since they were first invented and started committing violence against the Dramatic Illusion... Just an interesting fact.

Beat.

Thanks. Now, take a minute to check in with yourself. Are you okay? Is there an itch in your throat? Are you battling some sort of chest cold and feel a cough coming? Did you skip dessert and now you’re craving something sweet? Or perhaps your tongue just tastes a little weird? If you answered “yes” to any of these questions and are now *even remotely* entertaining the notion of a cough drop, hard candy, or *bonbon*, now’s your time to deal with that. I’ll wait until it’s clear to me that all candies and cough drops are unwrapped and/or consumed...

Beat.

Okay. Now: Are you feeling fidgety? And is there some sort of noisy paper or plastic wrapper situation in your hand? Some sort of purse or coat filled with a lot of loose change? Put it down. We’ve got our own sound design, but we appreciate your participatory spirit. I’ll wait a moment just to make sure that’s all happening...

Beat.

And my apologies to anyone I may have just offended with some sort of medical condition.

Beat.

Okay, great. So this is *Everybody*, which is a play. It runs approximately ninety minutes with no intermission—we hope!

Laughs at own joke, then:

Let’s see, um... It’s based on another play from the fifteenth century called *Everyman*, which is one of the earliest recorded plays in the English language. Now, for a while, we—or, you know, scholars—thought that this play was sort of collectively authored by a bunch

of monks who loved to put on plays for each other in Old Timey England, but we now know it was, in all likelihood, itself an adaptation of a slightly different, Dutch play called *Elckerlijc*—or *Den Speyghel der Salicheyt van Elckerlijc*—and about whose author we know nothing except that his name was Peter. And it also seems like this Dutch play—*Den Speyghel der Salicheyt van Elckerlijc*—was itself based on a Buddhist fable—and who even knows where the Buddhists were getting their fables from, so!

Laughs again.

But, um, it's safe to say we're dealing with some fairly *old* and *ancient* material, so maybe let's trust it to be really wise and meaningful, okay? And be a little forgiving of some of its...storytelling quirks? Like for instance: Some people in this play are not going to play people.

Beat as that sinks in, then:

Now, the original play, *Everyman*, purported to be about Life and its transience, which is to say it was really, I guess, about Death. It was also— (*Air quotes.*) “in manner” of a “morality play,” which means that there was a moral to it. Originally, this message was sort of like, “Hey, everybody. Don't be so crazy in life. Like, you may think all that ‘craziness’ is great initially because it's really fun but, when you die, you may sort of regret all that fun, because—though we honestly don't know what happens when you die—we have this *hunch* that you could wind up someplace which is objectively worse than this one—and let's call that ‘Hell,’ this state of eternal, unfathomable suffering. And this craziness—let's call it ‘sin’—this ‘sin,’ or at least too much of it, is our idea of how you wind up there. We think. But if you come hang out with us and be Catholic and let us sort of be your managers with regards to all things having to do with existence, we're pretty sure that, together, we can help you figure out how to not wind up in this place we have such a hunch about.”

Beat.

Or, if that weirds you out, there's also the Buddhist-ness at the heart of the material, which is just saying, like, “Hey, everybody, you know flowers? Like how they bloom in the spring and they're so pretty when you're looking at them and smelling them or whatever

but, by winter, they're dead and gone and you literally cannot recall anything specific about the specific flowers you just spent your whole spring smelling and looking at except for this vague memory of having smelled and look at some flowers once, in general, *maybe?*" Okay, this metaphor is a little unwieldy... To be honest, I don't really understand Buddhism, but from what I gather, it's about being like, "Everything about you—your existence, your experience, your memory, everything—is like a bunch of flowers. And, like flowers, when you die, all those things that made you You are broken down into the raw material that is used to make new bunches of flowers, so You, as you 'experience' 'yourself' in 'reality,' AKA this unique bunch of flowers, are never coming back. So think about that and what you want to do with the rest of your life, vis-à-vis that." Or something. Again: not Buddhist. And talking about Death, as we all know, is difficult.

Beat.

Anyhoo, this is all just to say that this specific play you're at right now is not that play or either of those plays exactly, though it does have similar ambitions. But we'll see.

Beat.

The fire exits are here and here. And, now, without further ado: "God."

Usher leads an applause before Usher begins to shake and seize, as if triggered by the clapping. Eventually, Usher's eyes roll into the back of Usher's head and—

II. THE SUMMONING

"God," who is unseen, speaks through the Usher. "God's" voice is non-human.

"GOD". THIS IS "GOD".

There is laughter in the audience.

WHAT IS THAT LAUGHTER AND TO WHOM DOES IT BELONG?
IS THAT MY OWN CREATION WHICH BELITTLES ME?

I WOULD HOPE NOT.
I WOULD HOPE THAT IT WAS MERELY MY IMAGINATION,
INFINITE AS IT IS,
PLAYING ONE OF ITS INFINITE TRICKS ON ME.
BECAUSE, OTHERWISE, THAT WOULD BE INFURIATING!
THAT WOULD BE THE EXACT SORT OF MOCKERY
WHICH HAS MOVED ME TO SPEAK IN THE FIRST PLACE!

If there is still laughing:

WHY ARE YOU STILL LAUGHING?!

Beat.

HOW MUCH LONGER MUST I SIT BY
AND WITNESS ALL MY CREATURES
IN THEIR HEARTS
GROW MORE AND MORE UNKIND TO ME?
FOR WHY SHOULD LAUGHTER COME WHEN I REVEAL
MYSELF?
BECAUSE OF THE VESSEL I HAVE CHOSEN?
BECAUSE I HAVE NO EYES?
WHAT NEED WOULD I HAVE FOR THESE PUNY ORGANS?
TO APPREHEND THIS MINOR PLANE OF MATTER
AND ILLUSION
THAT I'VE LET YOU INHABIT?
I, WHO HAVE USHERED EVERY DETAIL OF THIS WORLD
INTO BEING—
AND MOVE IT FORWARD WITH MY VERY BREATH,
WHICH IS TIME?
I, THE ALL-SEEING,
I, THE ALL-FEELING?
THE OMNISCIENT,
THE OMNIPOTENT,
THE OMNIPRESENT?
I NEED NO EYES!
I POSSESS THE VANTAGE OF DIVINITY
AND FROM IT I SEE IT IS YOU, LAFFER—
IF YOU INDEED EXIST—
WHO ARE UNSEEING—
PUTTING SUCH ESTEEM IN YOUR EARTHLY VISION,

EVERYBODY

by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

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9 actors (doubling, flexible casting)

This modern riff on the fifteenth-century morality play *Everyman* follows *Everybody* (chosen from amongst the cast by lottery at each performance) as they journey through life's greatest mystery—the meaning of living.

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“...[a] very meta and saucy adaptation...”
—**Time Out New York**

“[EVERYBODY] fills the heart in a new and unexpected way.”
—**The New Yorker**

Also by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins

APPROPRIATE

GLORIA

AN OCTOROON

and others

DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

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