



THE REVOLUTIONISTS

A COMEDY

A QUARTET

A REVOLUTIONARY DREAM FUGUE

A TRUE STORY

BY

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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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THE REVOLUTIONISTS was commissioned and first produced by the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park (Blake Robison, Artistic Director; Buzz Ward, Managing Director) in February, 2016. It was directed by Eleanor Holdridge, the scenic and costume designs were by Marion Williams, the lighting design was by Mark Barton, the sound design was by Scott Killian, and the stage manager was Andrea L. Shell. The cast was as follows:

OLYMPE DE GOUGES Lise Bruneau
CHARLOTTE CORDAY Keira Keeley
MARIE-ANTOINETTE Jessica Lynn Carroll
MARIANNE ANGELLE Kenita R. Miller

CHARACTERS

OLYMPE DE GOUGES—38. Badass activist playwright and feminist. Theatre nerd, excitable, passionate, a showman. Widowed and never remarried to ensure her personal freedom.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY— 25. Badass country girl and assassin. Very serious, hardened by righteousness, never been kissed. Has a pocket watch she keeps checking. Also plays FRATERNITÉ in a mask.

MARIE-ANTOINETTE—38. Less badass but fascinating former queen of France. Bubbly, graceful, opinionated, totally unaware, unintentionally rude, and oddly prescient. Never had a real friend. Also plays FRATERNITÉ in a mask.

MARIANNE ANGELLE— 30s. A badass black woman in Paris. She is from the Caribbean, a free woman, a spy working with her husband, Vincent. Tough, classy, vigilant, the sanest one of them all.

SETTING

Paris, the Reign of Terror (1793).
A safe place, a study, a prison cell, the Tribunal.
Then the scaffold.

PUNCTUATION AS RHYTHM PRIMER

(—) Dashes at the end of a sentence are cut-offs by the following line.

(—) Dashes within a sentence are self cut-offs, an acceleration into the next thought.

(...) Ellipses at the end of a sentence are trail-offs, unsure of what's next.

(*Breath.*) is a small, personal pause.

(*Pause.*) is a shared pause of average duration.

(*Beat.*) is a longer pause in which a personal change or revelation happens.

LEVELS OF INTENSITY INDICATED BY DIALOGUE FONT

Italics are more intense than not.

ALL CAPS ARE VERY INTENSE.

ALL CAPS AND ITALICS ARE THE MOST INTENSE.

NOTES ON THE PLAY

The play is mostly *a comedy*.

The play is based on real women, real transcripts, and real executions.

But remember it's *a comedy*.

The play runs with a seamlessness that necessitates less-realistic sets.

FRATERNITÉ is an almost commedia presence, a stock character of a bad guy, masked.

In the end, the entire play is in Olympe's mind as she walks up the stairs, onto the scaffold, and to her death.

THE REVOLUTIONISTS

ACT ONE

PROLOGUE.

In the dark.

A time of unrest in Paris—crisis—danger—threat.

The hum of “Our Song” faintly wafts in.

The sound of a scared breath that we are breathing.

It’s our breath—we are trying to steady our breath

Breath

Breath—

Then a sharp white light on, or the engorging shadow of...

A guillotine, its blade rising to the top.

A gasp.

Which slams into:

ONE.

*Olympe standing at her writing,
startled into an idea for a new play...*

OLYMPE. Well *that’s* not a way to start a comedy. With an execution? That’s just basic dramatic writing: Don’t start with beheadings. Audiences don’t want plays about terror and death—no—they want...hope. Yes, I have to write about...grace and power

in the face of crisis. Artistic defiance. Yes. That's good. There we go.

Spitballing now, testing out ideas as they come.

OK, what if I write a play that is the voice of this revolution, but not the hyperbolic, angry-yelling kind. I will write the wise and witty kind that satirizes and inspires and says to the held breath of a rapt audience... "something... profound."

So yeah. We're gonna have to cut the guillotine.

Marianne has entered with a bag—luggage.

She wears a red protest sash that reads: "Revolution for all!"

MARIANNE. Cut that thing! Serves it right.

OLYMPE. Oh my god, Marianne!

MARIANNE. I know this is crazy to just show up like this but hello and surprise!

Hugs!

OLYMPE. Hello and surprise! Oh my god, for a second I thought you were the national guard.

MARIANNE. Are they coming for the writers already?

OLYMPE. Only the important ones. I should be fine. Come in, come in. What are you doing here?

MARIANNE. Many things including, I hope, staying with you. Is that OK?

OLYMPE. Of course! Oh my god. Stay as long as you need.

MARIANNE. Thank you thank you.

OLYMPE. Don't thank me. I'm so glad to see you. I thought you went back to the Caribbean.

MARIANNE. Vincent went back, I stayed in Nice.

OLYMPE. Ooh Nice is nice.

MARIANNE. For some. For me? A lot less beach and a lot more political reconnaissance.

OLYMPE. What does that mean?

MARIANNE. Gathering intelligence to send home. That's why I'm back. Things are heating up and we need an eye in Paris and I'm it.

OLYMPE. So wait. I've been restarting the same play for a month

while you became a damn spy?!

MARIANNE. I mean...

OLYMPE. GIRL.

MARIANNE. I know.

OLYMPE. Look at you!

MARIANNE. Well, we decided we needed our own intel, really tap into the political machines or we'll never figure how to break them.

OLYMPE. You are my spy friend! God, you make me so much more interesting.

MARIANNE. Well don't get comfortable, I'm also here because I need you.

OLYMPE. Playwrights *love* hearing that. It's so rare.

MARIANNE. I need you to write for us. Pamphlets, articles, treatises about slavery—

OLYMPE. Monologues?

MARIANNE. Abolition human interest stories.

OLYMPE. But *as* monologues?

MARIANNE. Just—sure. Help us! You're the best writer I know.

OLYMPE. How many do you know?

MARIANNE. (*Lying.*) So many. (*Not lying.*) And you can help people understand what we're fighting for, freedom, justice, humanity, come on.

OLYMPE. Of course I'll help! But why don't *you* write this?

MARIANNE. Because I'm a better spy than I am a writer. Please.

OLYMPE. Yes. I'll write anything you want...as soon as I write my play.

MARIANNE. The play you can't even start? I'm rebelling against slavery and you're battling writer's block.

OLYMPE. *I'm not blocked.* I'm just...mentally...hibernating. There's a lot of pressure to write something profound these days. And then I keep thinking if I come up with a good title it'll get me started. Something tantalizing but really vague like...*"The Revolutionists."*

MARIANNE. You could do better.

OLYMPE. I know. Nothing's working. There is drama everywhere you look these days, why can't I write any of it?!

MARIANNE. You can! Pamphlets! For me! Write the truth that needs writing.

OLYMPE. But that's *your* truth. Which I will totally write, I will, but I also really need something of my own. I need a play that's good and important and annoyingly prescient.

MARIANNE. Then write the truth of an artist staring down a civil war.

OLYMPE. And end up with a play about a playwright writing a play? I'd rather watch a guillotine.

MARIANNE. So would everyone.

OLYMPE. Would they? Dammit. Back to guillotines.

MARIANNE. That's not what I meant.

OLYMPE. Setting: Now. Paris, France, 1793. Guillotines are very big these days. Actually they just came out with small ones too, for kids to kill mice and for wives to make salad.

MARIANNE. That's so messed up.

OLYMPE. It is. Everything is. Which is why the people's revolution has risen up with force enough to remove the king from power—

MARIANNE. and from his own head.

OLYMPE. Exactly. Danger, unrest. An epic battle for freedom and peace—

MARIANNE. For white men.

OLYMPE. Exactly. Which is why *my* play... (*A great idea.*) could be about *women* showing the boys how revolutions are done. Yes! Fighting for their rights to life, liberty, and...divorce.

MARIANNE. Divorce and decapitation? (*Slipping into couplets.*) I hope it's better than it sounds.

OLYMPE. It's comical yet quite profound

MARIANNE. Just doesn't sound like comedy—

OLYMPE. I know, but that's what it could be.

MARIANNE. You know it's always in the timing,

OLYMPE. Are you hearing all this rhyming?

Gasp.

Maybe I'm writing a musical!

MARIANNE. Oh god, no one wants a musical about the French Revolution.

OLYMPE. Probably right. How about a solemn, bracing political exposé—

MARIANNE. You're losing me.

OLYMPE. How about a thrilling, hilarious political exposé that will gather us as one community, to be inspired by great French art and—

MARIANNE. To boo at whichever new play they want.

OLYMPE. *They did not boo my play.* The abolition one from last year? No. That sound was the natural cathartic release from years of repressed racism and misogyny.

MARIANNE. So you're writing fantasy now?

OLYMPE. The people leapt to their feet.

MARIANNE. And to the exit.

OLYMPE. To tell their friends.

MARIANNE. That it was... "interesting."

OLYMPE. My plays piss off just the right kind of people thank you very much. Excuse me for trying to do something revolutionary during this revolution. This is our time to make a better world for everyone... who sees my plays.

MARIANNE. You're always so close to selflessness.

OLYMPE. Thank you. See now you've got me thinking. What about a passionate sociopolitical comedy about women's rights and—

MARIANNE. A feminist comedy? Girl, *don't*.

OLYMPE. OK, what if my play *starts out* as a comedy, but it'll *end* as a drama. That's fresh, right? We don't even have a word for that but—

MARIANNE. Like... "Life"?

OLYMPE. Just go with me on this: At first the play is witty and fun, maybe some puppets.

THE REVOLUTIONISTS

by Lauren Gunderson

4 women

Four beautiful, badass women lose their heads in this irreverent, girl-powered comedy set during the French Revolution's Reign of Terror. Playwright Olympe de Gouges, assassin Charlotte Corday, former queen (and fan of ribbons) Marie Antoinette, and Haitian rebel Marianne Angelle hang out, murder Marat, and try to beat back the extremist insanity in 1793 Paris. This grand and dream-tweaked comedy is about violence and legacy, art and activism, feminism and terrorism, compatriots and chosen sisters, and how we actually go about changing the world. It a true story. Or total fiction. Or a play about a play. Or a raucous resurrection...that ends in a song and a scaffold.

"...a sassy, hold-on-to-your-seats theatrical adventure. ...[Gunderson] has created a play that is wonderfully wild and raucous. ...It's a wild ride, filled with verbal gymnastics that come racing at you so quickly it's occasionally hard to keep up. Listen closely, though, and hang on tight. If you do, you'll be treated to an invigorating and enlightening journey."

—**The Cincinnati Enquirer**

"It's simply a brilliant script..."

—**CityBeat (Cincinnati)**

"...in this sparkling work, politics is very, very funny. [Gunderson] knows it's tricky to present entertaining, yet socially driven art, but she does so without losing the rhythm and forward momentum of her characters... These are hilarious and lovable women trapped in a history with a somber final act."

—**Houston Chronicle**

"...an astoundingly accomplished show...a cause for rejoice. ...Ingeniously conceived and delivered."

—**The Atlanta Journal-Constitution**

"THE REVOLUTIONISTS resembles a blindingly scintillating gem-like puzzle... By turns it is drolly funny and affectingly poignant, then doubles back to satirical farce, then ends by bringing into stark relief the social commentary that it has been nurturing all night."

—**FloridaTheaterOnStage.com**

Also by Lauren Gunderson

BAUER

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SILENT SKY

and others

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