



# OFFICE HOUR

BY JULIA CHO



DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



OFFICE HOUR  
Copyright © 2018, Julia Cho

All Rights Reserved

CAUTION: Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that performance of OFFICE HOUR 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 OFFICE HOUR 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 WME Entertainment, 11 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10010. Attn: John Buzzetti.

**SPECIAL NOTE**

Anyone receiving permission to produce OFFICE HOUR 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.

OFFICE HOUR was commissioned and first produced by South Coast Repertory (Marc Masterson, Artistic Director; Paula Tomei, Managing Director) on April 10, 2016. It was directed by Neel Keller, the scenic design was by Takeshi Kata and Se Oh, the costume design was by Alex Jaeger, the lighting design was by Elizabeth Harper, the original music and sound design were by Peter Bayne, the dramaturg was John Glore, and the stage manager was Sue Karutz. The cast was as follows:

GINA .....	Sandra Oh
DAVID .....	Corey Brill
GENEVIEVE .....	Sola Bamis
DENNIS .....	Raymond Lee

The New York premiere of OFFICE HOUR was presented by the Public Theater (Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director; Patrick Willingham, Executive Director) on October 17, 2017. It was directed by Neel Keller, the scenic design was by Takeshi Kata, the costume design was by Kaye Voyce, the lighting design was by Christopher Akerlind, and the original music and sound design were by Bray Poor. The cast was as follows:

GINA .....	Sue Jean Kim
DAVID .....	Greg Keller
GENEVIEVE .....	Adeola Role
DENNIS .....	Ki Hong Lee

## **CHARACTERS**

GINA: 30s. An instructor.

DAVID: 30s. An instructor.

GENEVIEVE: A little younger than Gina and David. An instructor.

DENNIS: 18. A student.

## **SETTING**

Near and on a university campus.

A winter day.

# OFFICE HOUR

## 1

*Café. Gina, David, and Genevieve.*

DAVID. All right, shall we?

GENEVIEVE. Should I? I had him first.

DAVID. Go ahead. Tell us everything you remember.

GENEVIEVE. Okay last year. He showed up in my Intro to Poetry class. He was wearing those sunglasses and that baseball cap down over his face. I had everyone go around, you know, say their names, say a little bit about themselves. He was in the back—everyone's around the table but he's all the way against the wall—so the first pass misses him and we have to go back to him at the end.

So it's his turn and he says: nothing. Doesn't even move. I try prodding him: What's your name? Where are you from? And he just keeps sitting there. I started thinking: Does this guy speak English? What is going on?

And then comes the first assignment. It's simple: write a villanelle. He writes—the first line's something like: "The art of ass raping isn't hard to master." I'm not kidding! And you know it's a villanelle so it *repeats*. And the rest is about—raping bleeding eye sockets and getting raped and just rape rape rape, it was awful. (*To Gina.*) You think that's funny?

GINA. No. God no.

GENEVIEVE. So I email him and I'm like: What is this. He's like: It's a parody. And I'm thinking: Do you think I'm stupid? Because believe me, if it were satirical, if it displayed any sense of nuance or self-awareness or humor—. But it was the most blunt, immature, offensive—it was—I'm not even describing it right. And the class is

half women—*over* half women. They started emailing me in a panic. *We have a rapist in our class! We have a rapist in our class!*

DAVID. So what'd you do?

GENEVIEVE. I immediately told Professor Lang about it. She agreed it was totally inappropriate, but at the same time, it's a creative writing class; technically the students can write about whatever they want. And the university has that whole "intellectual freedom" policy—

DAVID. He knows that, believe me, he uses it.

GENEVIEVE. Well, it got worse from there. I mean, the contents of this kid's brain—! Other students started not coming to class. They said he scared them. They said he freaked them out.

So I begged Professor Lang to get him out of my class. She said her hands were tied. He'd done nothing to deserve disciplinary action. There was no proof he was dangerous or violent. So I tried reporting him to student health services. I mean, clearly this kid needed help. But no, they said he was an adult. He had to go voluntarily. Willingly. Yeah, like *that* was going to happen.

GINA. Did you try talking to him?

GENEVIEVE. (*Makes a disgusted sound.*) Yes. Like that did any good. He just has this *force field*. Just trying to get him to say anything—at all. He just sits there— (*To David.*) you know, you've tried.

DAVID. I have tried.

GINA. So what exactly happened when you tried talking to him? How'd he respond?

GENEVIEVE. Complete wall. I tried asking him about friends. Family. His poetry. Why he wants to be a writer. Nothing. I mean, maybe if I were *lucky*, he'd deign to speak like a word or two. But sometimes he'd take such a long time to answer that by the time he mumbled something out, I wouldn't even remember the question! It was insane.

Finally, I just quarantined him. I had him submit his poetry only to me. But I couldn't even flunk him. The assignments were complete, on time. Awful, but on time. So in the end, I could dock him on class participation, but that was it. After everything, he ended up getting a decent grade. But the relief when that class ended, I can't even tell you.

DAVID. Which leads him, in the fall, to my class. Writing for Stage and Screen.

GINA. And was it bad?

DAVID. Abysmal. It was the same thing. Violent, brutal—he seems obsessed with torture and pedophilia—

GENEVIEVE. Uh-huh uh-huh—

DAVID. —and these super-detailed revenge scenarios. Brutal sex scenes. But all of it immature, like it's so obvious the kid has never actually *had* sex.

GENEVIEVE. (*Disgusted.*) Can you imagine?

DAVID. The worst, though, was that because they're writing scenes, the students have to read their work out loud. Like, act it out. I mean, you haven't lived until you've heard some corn-fed kid from Iowa say the line, "I'm going to ass-fuck you till you bleed...*Dad.*" Yeah, yeah, that's a direct quote.

It was—after his first scene, the room got very still, very quiet, but it was like you could hear everyone's thoughts screaming: *This kid is really fucked up.* No one knew what to say. What can you say?

GINA. But you tried talking to him too?

DAVID. Of course. Well, he started coming to my office hours. Like, every time. He showed up, always just five minutes before I was done for the day, that little prick, and he'd sit there, *say nothing*, and basically just waste my time.

GENEVIEVE. God, just being alone with him, in a one-on-one conversation...

DAVID. Finally I told him to stop coming. The bastard hated me. I didn't give a shit; I gave him Fs.

GINA. You did not.

DAVID. Yes I did. His scenes were awful. He deserved Fs. It got to the point where the other students refused to read his scenes. It was like a revolt. And who could blame them? His scenes *were* disgusting. Revolting.

GENEVIEVE. You failed him? Good for you. I wish I had.

DAVID. Actually no, you don't, because he became a super-huge

pain in the ass. He went on every site that rates teachers and gave me the most awful ratings—

GENEVIEVE. No—

DAVID. He wrote letters complaining about me to Professor Lang, to the dean—

GENEVIEVE. Oh David, I had no idea—

DAVID. All these bogus usernames and letters signed, “A concerned student.”

GINA. Then how’d you know it was him?

DAVID. It *had* to be. I read the reviews. The language was *exactly* like the language in his screenplays. Same awkward phrases and shitty grammar. That’s how stupid he is.

GINA. He doesn’t seem *that* bad; I mean, he’s quiet but... They just turned in their first assignment. I guess I’ll see.

DAVID. Well the shit he writes is only part of it. I mean, that’s not really what we’re talking about, is it.

GINA. Then what are we talking about?

*David and Genevieve exchange a look.*

DAVID. All right I’ll just say it: He’s a classic shooter.

GENEVIEVE. It’s true. I didn’t want to say it, but that’s exactly what everyone thinks.

GINA. I—wait. You think this kid is capable of...?

DAVID. Yes, absolutely. Why do you think I got in touch with you guys? Why do you think we’re here discussing him?

GINA. I thought we were going to discuss a troubled student, that’s the word you used, “troubled”—

DAVID. I think I said “trouble” as in, “this kid is trouble.” I mean, look at the profile: Painfully socially awkward. Totally isolated. Delusional—he thinks he’s a great writer. Obsessed with violence. Oh—and this is the scary part—most likely no history of documented mental illness. And he’s probably committed zero crimes. He could just waltz into any gun shop and arm himself to the teeth.

GINA. Don’t you think that’s a little...?

DAVID. You don’t know, you’re not the one who flunked him. The



fact is, when he comes to school loaded for bear, I'll be the first stop.  
GINA. But there are violent screenplays, movies; I mean, there's a whole genre—

DAVID. Yeah, and poetry? Is that a violent genre too?

GINA. I'm just saying, his writing's disturbing, but that doesn't mean—anything—*necessarily*—

DAVID. You're right. It doesn't. Every semester I've got kids working on horror stories, war stories, gang stories. The body count by the end of the year is obscene. If I thought just writing about violence meant a kid was violent, one, I'd be stupid, and two, I'd think most of my students were homicidal. But this kid is different. Even if I'd never read a single word he wrote, just looking at him, being around him, it's obvious he's not *normal*. I mean, you've seen him—do *you* think he's okay?

GINA. (*Pause.*) So tell the school, tell the authorities.

DAVID. Tell them what? We *think* this kid *might* be up to something dangerous?

GINA. Tell them he needs help. That he needs to be evaluated, like professionally.

DAVID. Did you hear Genevieve? She tried.

GENEVIEVE. They said the only way is for him to voluntarily commit himself. The question is: Does he pose a threat to himself or to others? I say: Yes.

DAVID. I say hell yes.

GENEVIEVE. But proving it—it's impossible.

GINA. What about family? Has anyone tried to get in touch with them?

DAVID. How? It's not like he's going to tell us their names or contact info. The school has it but that's personal, they're not going to share it.

GINA. So what do we do?

*Pause.*

GENEVIEVE. Well...maybe you could try talking to him.

GINA. Me?

DAVID. He is in your class now.

GINA. You mean he's my problem now.

# OFFICE HOUR

by Julia Cho

2 men, 2 women

Gina was warned that one of her students would be a problem. Eighteen years old and strikingly odd, Dennis writes violently obscene work clearly intended to unsettle those around him. Determined to know whether he's a real threat, Gina compels Dennis to attend her office hours. But as the clock ticks down, Gina realizes that "good" versus "bad" is nothing more than a convenient illusion, and that the isolated young student in her office has learned one thing above all else: For the powerless, the ability to terrify others is powerful indeed.

*"...vital, honest, and valuable. ...OFFICE HOUR is interested not only in the question of gun violence, but in the painful, isolating struggle faced by the children of immigrant parents in this country."*

—New York Magazine

*"...[an] urgent and sensitive drama... tense and extremely well thought out... What is so gripping about the play...is the ever-present fear of horrific violence that permeates the space, even as sympathy grows for Dennis. ...Cho effectively calls for compassion and outreach from a society that commonly creates violent loners out of troubled children."*

—BroadwayWorld.com

*"...tension-filled...incisive... There's no denying the visceral intensity of this work."*

—The Hollywood Reporter

Also by Julia Cho

AUBERGINE

DURANGO

THE PIANO TEACHER

and others

DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

ISBN 978-0-8222-3861-4



9 780822 123861 4