



# GABRIEL

BY **MOIRA  
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DRAMATISTS  
PLAY SERVICE  
INC.



GABRIEL  
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The New York premiere of GABRIEL was produced by Atlantic Theater Company (Neil Pepe, Artistic Director; Jeffery Lawson, Managing Director) in May 2010. It was directed by David Esbjornson, the set design was by Riccardo Hernández, the costume design was by Martin Pakledinaz, the lighting design was by Scott Zielinski, the sound design was by Obadiah Eaves, and the production stage manager was Alison DeSantis. The cast was as follows:

JEANNE BECQUET ..... Lisa Emery  
LILIAN BECQUET ..... Samantha Soule  
ESTELLE BECQUET ..... Libby Woodbridge  
MARGARET LAKE ..... Patricia Conolly  
VON PFUNZ ..... Zach Grenier  
GABRIEL ..... Lee Aaron Rosen

GABRIEL was first performed at the Soho Theatre, London, on May 1, 1997. It was directed by Fiona Buffini and designed by Juilan McGowan. The cast was as follows:

JEANNE BECQUET ..... Lisa Harrow  
LILIAN BECQUET ..... Jennifer Scott-Malden  
ESTELLE BECQUET ..... Gemma Eglinton  
MARGARET LAKE ..... Gillian Goodman  
VON PFUNZ ..... Philip Fox  
GABRIEL ..... Stephen Billington

## **CHARACTERS**

JEANNE BECQUET, mid-forties, a widow

LILIAN BECQUET, mid-twenties, her daughter-in-law

ESTELLE BECQUET, aged ten, her daughter

MARGARET LAKE, their housekeeper

VON PFUNZ, a Nazi

GABRIEL

## **PLACE AND TIME**

An island on the edge of a fascist occupation  
Guernsey, February 1943

# GABRIEL

## One

*A child lights two candles.  
In their light we see she is a girl, about ten years old.  
She is crouching in the middle of a flagstone floor.  
She puts her ear to the ground as if she can hear something  
deep beneath her.  
With great energy and concentration, she draws a chalk square  
around one of the flags.  
She puts herself in the middle of it.  
She makes some strange movements with her hands.  
As if she is creating in the air a protected space.  
When it is done, she closes her eyes.*

ESTELLE. Don't let them come any nearer. Keep them away  
Please keep them away  
I send my wish crashing through the rocks  
That everything'll fall on them  
In the sky that their planes will crash in flames  
That the sea will roar with storms  
And I say drown them all, destroy them all  
Fling them to pieces for taking our house  
And let my brother come like a bright angel  
To save me. Save me

*Margaret Lake enters carrying a lamp.*

MRS. LAKE. What are you doing?

ESTELLE. Nothing

MRS. LAKE. Well get up then

*The lamp throws light on a table. There is a barrel of brandy  
on it, a crate of bottles, a funnel and a jug of water.*

ESTELLE. I'm afraid I can't move just yet Mrs. Lake

MRS. LAKE. Why not?

ESTELLE. I'm involved in something

MRS. LAKE. You were going to help me

*Mrs. Lake gets to work filling the bottles with brandy and  
topping them up with water.*

ESTELLE. I'm listening to the men

MRS. LAKE. What men?

ESTELLE. The men underneath

MRS. LAKE. Rubbish

They're miles away

Not even close

ESTELLE. I can hear the machines

MRS. LAKE. They won't come under here

We're too near the sea

Damn tunnels'd flood

ESTELLE. They're coming right under  
Miles of sleeping rooms and food stores

So that when the allies bomb us

They'll be safe and sound down there

While on the surface all is burning

MRS. LAKE. Come and help me with this

ESTELLE. I can't

MRS. LAKE. Why not?

ESTELLE. I'm in an enchantment

MRS. LAKE. Well, that's marvellous

*Mrs. Lake tastes the watered-down brandy. She is satisfied.*

It's dwarves you can hear down there, working in their gold mine

ESTELLE. Dwarves don't exist

They're slaves

MRS. LAKE. Don't call them that

ESTELLE. They don't get paid

They don't get fed

They got faces like ghosts

MRS. LAKE. Don't think about them then  
I'm sure I never do

ESTELLE. I saw one in the lane when it was getting dark  
All pale and bony  
He said something in Foreign

MRS. LAKE. To you?

ESTELLE. I had a sandwich in my pocket  
So I threw it

MRS. LAKE. I don't give you food to throw away

ESTELLE. He went on his knees in front of it  
His mouth open  
Horrible in the dark like a big O

MRS. LAKE. They got no business talking to you  
Tinkers and sodomites from all o' Europe

ESTELLE. Do you know what he was wearing under his jacket?

MRS. LAKE. What?

ESTELLE. A coal sack  
They work in blackness down there  
I imagine it at nights  
Miles of broken rocks  
And water dripping on their heads.  
I can hear them shouting in my dreams  
All foreign through the earth  
And when they collapse or die  
The Krauts just shove them in the concrete  
Bury them in the walls

MRS. LAKE. Rubbish

ESTELLE. If you climb up the barn you can see their camp—

MRS. LAKE. No you can't  
It's not to do with us.

If you don't look  
Then you will never see.  
Get off the floor

ESTELLE. I don't want to

MRS. LAKE. Why not?

ESTELLE. (*Suddenly smiling.*) I made something

MRS. LAKE. What?

ESTELLE. A square of power

MRS. LAKE. Where?

ESTELLE. It's surrounding me

MRS. LAKE. Don't make me laugh

ESTELLE. Whoever's in it will be compelled to take their clothes off and dance, nude

MRS. LAKE. You little devil

Come on then, strip off

Let's see you dancing

ESTELLE. I don't have to

I made it didn't I

MRS. LAKE. Square of power

You clown

A square of power don't mean a thing

ESTELLE. It does

MRS. LAKE. Come on out the way then

See if I strip off

ESTELLE. Well you won't, will you

You know about it

So you can defend yourself

MRS. LAKE. A *circle* is power

Not a square

ESTELLE. I don't want a circle

MRS. LAKE. Square of power

ESTELLE. Stop laughing at me

MRS. LAKE. All the power in that's just going to seep out the corners

ESTELLE. Is it?

MRS. LAKE. Course it is

*Estelle gets up. There is nowhere comfortable for her to sit.*



ESTELLE. I hate this house

I want our Hermitage back

What would Myles say

If he knew there were Krauts living there?

MRS. LAKE. Come on now / sweetheart

ESTELLE. What if he knew you were selling them

Black market drink

MRS. LAKE. This is their own drink

We are selling back to them.

If Myles was here

He'd think it genius

ESTELLE. What if he knew that Mummy went out with that  
Captain?

MRS. LAKE. Where did you hear that?

ESTELLE. I'm not an idiot

MRS. LAKE. She was friendly with the Captain but he's gone.

And now the Kommandant has got the Hermitage

She must keep good relations so they don't take nothing else

ESTELLE. They chucked us out without a day to get our stuff

And I left Mr. Punch

MRS. LAKE. You'll get him back

Your mother's gone to ask them hasn't she

This is a sturdy little place

There's nothing wrong with it

ESTELLE. It hasn't even got a bloody toilet

MRS. LAKE. Watch your mouth

*Lily enters, breathless, distressed.*

LILY. Lake

There's a man down by the beach

Unconscious

Come and help me bring him back

MRS. LAKE. Who is he?

LILY. Looks like he's been in the sea

Think he must have crawled up the beach

We can't let him die

# GABRIEL

by Moira Buffini

2 men, 4 women

In Nazi-occupied Guernsey, an island in the English Channel off the coast of Normandy, the Becquet family's home is requisitioned by German officers. As widowed matriarch Jeanne navigates the dangerous game of Major Von Pfunz's attraction to her, her Jewish daughter-in-law discovers a strange and beautiful man washed up on the shore. Wracked by fever, the man can remember nothing, including his own name; with equal probability he's a downed Royal Air Force pilot or an overboarded SS officer, Jeanne's daughters convince her to shelter him until his memory returns. But harboring this fallen Gabriel threatens the modicum of safety and stability Jeanne's wrung from her family's dispossession.

*"[This] tense tale of wartime intrigue and romance makes for riveting watching... [Buffini's] thoughtful writing steers clear of melodramatic cliché, grounding the play's events in emotional truth and complex characterizations. ...As befits the genre [the play] concludes with a rip-snorter of a scene that springs several surprises...[and] the sheer polish, narrative dash and dramatic brio of GABRIEL got my theater-loving juices flowing..."*  
—**The New York Times**

*"Buffini takes [a] situation, pregnant with possibility, and spins more plot out of it than you can shake a fistful of sticks at, with the result that the two and a half hours glide by, the dramatic tension cranked up by eavesdropping, sudden interruptions and confrontations around every corner."*  
—**The Independent (UK)**

*"This is a fascinating chapter of history. [T]elevision is busy plundering epic fictional 'what-if?'s... But the fate of the Channel Islanders—effectively abandoned by the UK and treated, initially, with relative restraint by the barely resisted Germans—lies within the realm of grim fact. ...What's impressive about GABRIEL, though, is its theatrical compactness and thematic complexity: it has a thriller-like plot but it also flirts with uneasy mirth, earthy romance and otherworldly inklings—into this life-and-death situation creep intimations of the supernatural."* —**The Telegraph (UK)**

**Also by Moira Buffini**  
HANDBAGGED

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