

AUNT JACK

BY
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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.

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For Morgan and James, who make me feel safe

AUNT JACK had its world premiere at Empire Stage in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, in July 2018. It was directed by Michael Bush, the set design was by Ardean Landhuis, the costume design was by Peter Lovello, the lighting design was by Kirk Bookman, and the production stage manager was Kelly Zahnen. The cast was as follows:

NORMAN Bobby Eddy
GEORGE Harry Redlich
JACK Charles Baran
PHYLLIS Merry Jo Cortada
IAN Daniel Barrett
ANDY Shannon Booth

AUNT JACK had its New York premiere at Theater for the New City, produced by Jenna Grossano and Unstoppable Theater, in association with Less Than Rent Theatre and Kayla Bernie, with support from Brian Barnhart, Scott Durkin, Bruce Sloane, and John and Bette Wischhusen, in June 2019. It was directed by John Lampe, the set design was by Anna Driftmier, the costume design was by Holly Pocket McCaffrey, the lighting design was by Kirk Bookman and Steve O’Shea, the sound design and original music was by Michael Wysong, the graphic design was by Sarah Hegarty, the choreographer was Melissa Rose Hirsch, the stage manager was Noah Sarkowsky, and the production stage manager was Emma Frances Philipbar. The cast was as follows:

NORMAN Nora Brigid Monahan, Jack Bowman
GEORGE Andrew Dawson
JACK Charles Baran
PHYLLIS Shauna Bloom
IAN Matthew Menendez
ANDY Morgan Sullivan

AUNT JACK was developed by Wide Eyed Productions and Vermont Pride Theater.

CHARACTERS

NORMAN

GEORGE

JACK

PHYLLIS (“PHYLL”)

IAN

ANDY

AUNT JACK

OVERTURE

Darkness.

Feedback blares through the speakers as a shoddy microphone is turned on. After a moment, the feedback stops, and we hear a voice from the darkness.

NORMAN. Can I get some light, please?

Feedback returns for a moment, then dissipates.

No, no, the sound was good! I just don't think I'm visible... A little light would be good.

Beat.

THEY CAN'T SEE ME!

A spotlight flickers on with a loud buzz, revealing Norman Sable-Church, 20s, dressed casually and holding a corded microphone.

(To someone in the wings.) Thanks.

Beat, then to the audience:

Okay, San Francisco, how's everybody doing tonight...? That good, huh? Big thank you to Jerry and everybody here at the Backdoor for letting me be here. This is only my third time doing standup, and there aren't a ton of you here, so, I guess... Let's get this over with.

Beat.

My name's Norman. My parents thought it was okay to name me that. My dad's almost eighty. So. That's his excuse. And my step-dad's just a sadist. So, that's how you get a twenty-something named Norman.

Beat.

For those who are paying attention, yes, I have two dads. Gay dads. One's a political activist, other's a cabaret singer slash drag superstar. And my birth mom's gay too. And I'm gay. And you know the thing that's weird about that to me is just how like, statistically unlikely it is. You know what I mean? Like they used to say that it was one in ten. One out of every ten people's supposed to be gay. But, like, everyone I know is gay. If I'm meeting you for the first time, I just assume you're gay. It could be geography—I grew up in New York, before coming to the Bay Area. So, “per capita” and all that. But I don't know. I really think more people are gay than ten percent.

Beat.

But maybe not. I say I'm gay, but I have to admit, I'm not *totally* gay. If I'm honest, the first person I ever masturbated to was a woman. I still feel comfortable saying I'm gay because that woman was Bernadette Peters, so... And in case you're wondering, yes, my entire set tonight is about my sexual identity, because I'm a millennial and it's the law.

Beat.

So, one day my dad walks in on me jerking it to Bernadette in *Into the Woods*. Caught me right in the act. Act Two. And let me tell you, he was *not* ready for that. You might think growing up in a liberal, queer family would make puberty easier to go through. And I guess it makes sense theoretically, but no. Not easier. At all. I actually think straight parents have it easier. Because the straight sex talk ends with “and that's how you get a baby!” And the gay sex talk ends with “and that's how you poop out semen!”

Beat.

It's easier after puberty, though, when you've got gay parents. 'Cause after puberty is politics, when the kid suddenly becomes super aware of things that are like stupidly obvious. And my dad is super political. He's got a new book out, his gay history of the twentieth century, and he's promoting it right now. So, the other day he's doing a Q and A at a college campus. I've heard it's hard to do standup at colleges nowadays, but that's nothing next to a political Q and A as an old white guy who's not Bernie Sanders. So, he's at this college, and he says something like—

Lights abruptly cut out on Norman. A bright spotlight snaps

up on George Church, a scholar in his 70s, sitting onstage in a university auditorium, responding to an unseen moderator.

GEORGE. Fuck equality! I never understood why we started marching around saying we're just like everybody else. We are *not* like straight people. We're *better*. We are kinder, more intelligent, more talented, and better equipped to have healthy relationships. Those're the stats, people. So would someone please tell me why, of all the causes, all the hills we could've died on, we picked *marriage*? Really? Centuries of hard-earned political capital spent so we could take part in a heterosexual institution that fails as often as it succeeds?

He coughs mightily, then clears his throat.

Don't get me wrong, I never *opposed* marriage—I've been married to my husband Jack for thirty years. But we didn't wait for the United States government to tell us it was okay. We got married in 1989. The government wanted us dead! I carried friends out of hospitals in garbage bags, because no one would touch them. And this next generation, these kids have *no* appreciation for that. They talk about how much they suffer and how hard it is for them. They drone on and on that we need to be more "inclusive." Well, guess what? The gay community is not a goddamn social club! It's not our job to let everybody in!

Coughs again, then a beat.

In a hundred years, when somebody writes a book about gay culture in the twenty-first century, what're they gonna talk about? *Marriage*? That's not what being gay's about. It's not even about sex—not exclusively. Everything has sex—birds do it, bees do it, educated fleas and so on. But *we*, we have so much more. Music, art, poetry, the theatre... Culture. Aesthetics. Calisthenics, if we're up to it.

Beat.

Yes, the gay community is being accepted—slowly—by the rest of society. But I say, if they really accept us, let them leave us the fuck alone! If everybody else—if the *mainstream* is taking a liking to gay culture, they should have to come to *us*, not—

Coughs.

Not the—

Now a coughing fit.

—the other way a—Who do I have to blow for a glass of water?

Lights out on George. In the darkness, music begins.

ANNOUNCER. (*Phyll, O.S.*) And now, please welcome the fabulous Jack Sable!

A spotlight snaps up on Jack Sable, a gorgeous drag queen in his 50s, with fiery red hair. A piano plays in the darkness, as he sings...

JACK.

AFTER YOU'VE GONE AND LEFT ME CRYIN',
AFTER YOU'VE GONE, THERE'S NO DENYIN',
YOU'LL FEEL BLUE, YOU'LL FEEL SAD,
YOU'LL MISS THE DEAREST PAL YOU'VE EVER HAD,

THERE'LL COME A TIME, NOW DON'T FORGET IT,
THERE'LL COME A TIME, WHEN YOU'LL REGRET IT,
SOMEDAY, WHEN YOU GROW LONELY,
YOUR HEART WILL BREAK LIKE MINE AND YOU'LL
WANT ME ONLY,
AFTER YOU'VE GONE,
AFTER YOU'VE GONE AWAY!

*After his big finish, Jack strikes a wild pose.
Blackout.*

AUNT JACK

by Nora Brigid Monahan

4 men, 2 women

After a crushing breakup with his long-term boyfriend, Norman moves across the country to get away from his former life, much to the dismay of his fathers, George and Jack. When some troubling news brings Norman back home, he returns with his new partner, Andy, to make amends. But the long-anticipated reunion is challenged when differences in politics, sexual identity, and love threaten the bonds Norman has come to rebuild.

“Monahan displays a deft touch as a writer... At times I was reminded of comic situations in Rossini operas in which there are so many funny variables at work that the whole musical structure feels like it might fall apart if not for the skill of the composer—like a juggler keeping many balls in the air.”

—Charged.fm

“AUNT JACK has some seriously funny lines and some surprisingly touching moments, both of which sneak up on you. The tragicomedy... is a wickedly witty swipe at sexual identity and gender politics. Or maybe it’s gender identity and sexual politics.”

—The Sun-Sentinel

“This is a very funny play. There are laugh out loud lines as personalities, world views and motivations clash.”

—TheFrontRowCenter.com

Also by Nora Brigid Monahan
DIVA: LIVE FROM HELL (Oyen)

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