



**FREE FREE  
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BY  
**HALEH ROSHAN**



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INC.

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FREE FREE FREE FREE premiered as part of the Exponential Festival, New York City, in January 2018, produced by Brandon Smithey. It was directed by Jaki Bradley, the costume design was by Phuong Nguyen, the set design was by Frank J. Oliva, the sound design was by Anthony Banda, and the stage manager was Aaron Watson. The cast was as follows:

ROSE ..... Songnia Xiao  
JESSIE ..... Akyiaa Wilson  
SEAN ..... Seth Moore  
ARTHUR ..... Will Turner  
KATHLEEN ..... Abby Leigh Huffstetler  
VICTOR ..... JJ Bozeman

## THANK YOU

To Colin Wright and Amanda Tong, for the family and friendship, and at whose unparalleled wedding this play was birthed.

To Andrey Kobzar for the Sutro Baths sunset and the Brautigan book.

To Theresa Buchheister for taking a chance on this and me after only a cold email and cold coffee.

To Nic Adams for every second of support in that unsupportive place, and for treating spilled soup like spilled milk.

To Jaki Bradley for the ruthless cuts, the ice vortex rehearsals, and being a true writer's director. This is a play because you pushed it to be.

To Seth Moore and Will Turner, for every character question, for your friendship, your dramaturgical intelligence, your humor, and your motherfucking unreal performing gifts.

To Akyiaa Wilson for carrying us through, and for (forever) so graciously rolling with my murderous monologues.

To Songnia Xiao for taking the risks and going to the deepest places.

To JJ Bozeman for loving this play, for being the Victor I dreamed of, and for your enormous heart.

To Abby Leigh Huffstetler, for being there from the beginning and making Kathleen who she needed to become.

To Aaron Mark, for so fervently fighting for the play when I was losing faith.

To Brandon Smithey, for everything always.

## CHARACTERS

*(see notes on people at the back of this volume)*

### ROSE

22ish. Chinese American. 3rd generation. San Francisco born and raised. SFAI grad. A painter and visual artist.  
Coming into her politics.

### JESSIE

27ish. Black American from Oakland. A lawyer and a Panther. Comes to the Diggers through her acquaintance with Arthur.  
Her anger, though bottomless, is diamond-sharp;  
a true revolutionary.

### SEAN

25ish. Irish American. 1st generation. Dangerously charismatic. High school dropout, ex-service member (drafted).  
Everything he does, even privately, is a performance.  
His anger is undirected and bottomless.

### ARTHUR

27ish. Italian American. 2nd generation. Red diaper baby from New York City. PhD, Berkeley. A writer/poet/theorist.  
For Arthur the revolution is theoretical.

### KATHLEEN

19ish. White. From somewhere in America. Exudes rare quality of effortless and sincere generosity.  
In Haight-Ashbury to find the counter-America.

### VICTOR

20ish. Half Filipino, born in San Francisco with an immigrant parent. Student at San Francisco State. Member of SDS.  
The most committed.

## SETTING

San Francisco, 1966–1969...and somehow 2016–2019, too.

The first floor (living/kitchen/common areas) of a house in the Haight. Each resident has claimed some personal space in the communal area: a typewriter somewhere for Arthur, a corner with painting supplies for Rose, a specific chair near the record player for Sean, more stuff implying other inhabitants and/or that Kathleen and Victor will claim.

A large yellow frame in the playing space will slide around to highlight certain sections of a scene. If this frame can move automatically, so much the better. If not, only Rose, Jessie (in her scenes), and/or conspicuous stagehands should push/move it.

Otherwise the house is a normal San Francisco townhouse, old and lovely, with a steep stoop and character, as they say. A house resilient to the abuse it will endure over the course of the play, its passing years.

The house need not be depicted naturalistically. We might be in a bare theater but for the Frame of Reference, a single staircase leading to nowhere, props.

## NOTES

The play should be performed in the round or alley-style. The audience must be visible to each other.

As I hope will become immediately clear, the methodology of making this play is as integral to “performing” it as the staging and other traditional production elements. Please see notes at the back of this volume for more guidance on how in the original New York production we achieved as much of a historical materialist production as we could under the inevitable limitations of time and capital.

*“History is not the past. It is the stories we tell about the past. How we tell these stories—triumphantly or self-critically, metaphorically or dialectally—has a lot to do with whether we cut short or advance our evolution as human beings.*

*People are aware that they cannot continue in the same old way but are immobilized because they cannot imagine an alternative. We need a vision that recognizes that we are at one of the great turning points in human history when the survival of our planet and the restoration of our humanity require a great sea change in our ecological, economic, political, and spiritual values.”*

—Grace Lee Boggs,  
Chinese-American Marxist intellectual and organizer

*“Did we overcome [chauvinism]? Of course we didn’t. Or as I like to say, we didn’t get these brothers from revolutionary heaven.”*

—Elaine Brown,  
Leader of the Black Panther Party, 1974–1977

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## ACT ONE

*In the ideal version of this play, everyone involved with its production will have been, from the first day of rehearsals to the performance, keeping a record of their daily expenses over that time, plus any payments received, to the best of each person's ability. This data would be [with identifying information removed] presented before the show somehow—in the lobby like an art gallery, maybe printed out into binders and positioned under a Frame of Reference...*

*If this part of the project is attempted, it should not pressure any person participating or the production as a whole to alter their living habits in any way. No effort should be made to “keep expenses down” for the sake of public scrutiny, nor to otherwise reconsider one's daily financial decisions.*

*Whether the above is incorporated into the project or not, it is important this play “begin” well before the curtain rises. The audience should, with or without their awareness, step directly from the street into something that has always been: the history of all hitherto existing society.*

*If any of the actors felt able and would mingle in the crowd before the performance (without revealing their identity), strike up conversations with patrons, buy a drink for an audience member, that would be great. If an actor wanted to be seated with the audience before the production, and then have to climb over people to get out to the stage when lights dim and/or they have to appear onstage, that would also be excellent.*



## Scene 1

*In some way, at rise, the actors playing Rose and Jessie will appear in front of the audience. Through the below, the actors should feel free to respond to any audience activity or comments as she likes.*

*(This particular section reflects the scene as written for a Manhattan alley-style theater converted from an apartment; there was a full bath on one end of the space, requiring a long cross through the playing area for anyone who needed to use it. We also generally had 9 P.M. curtains and \$15 tickets. Text in brackets should be revised for particular productions. Text not in brackets must be performed as written.)*

ACTOR PLAYING ROSE. Hi. I'm [name].

ACTOR PLAYING JESSIE. Hi, I'm [name].

ACTOR PLAYING ROSE. Before we begin, we who made this show have a few things to go over with you. First, cell phones... We are not going to ask you to turn them off. We recognize that there are any number of reasons why a person would need to have their cell phone audible and accessible throughout a two-hour event. However, I am going to explain that this is a communal space, where if someone's phone rings, *everyone* hears it. And therefore you have changed the experience for everyone else.

ACTOR PLAYING JESSIE. Which, again, we agree you have the right to do, we won't stop the show and yell at you if your phone goes off, but we are asking you to seriously consider, right now, whether you *need* to do that, i.e. if there's *really* something that would require you to separate yourself from *this* community for the next one hundred minutes. If not, please smash that do-not-disturb button.

*The actors wait until everyone has made their personal decision.*

ACTOR PLAYING ROSE. Awesome. Thank you for making a personal, conscientious decision. Now I would like to draw your attention to (*The Frame of Reference.*) this giant yellow thing you passed through to get to your seats. This is called the Frame of

Reference. It's not a subtle name, so I'm not going to explain anything else about it. You can decide what that's all about on your own.

ACTOR PLAYING JESSIE. Okay, some things about tonight and the space. [The bathroom is there. Please feel free to use the bathroom during the show; all of the actors in this show are living human beings aware of what's happening in the room and can adjust themselves if you need to get to it.]

ACTOR PLAYING ROSE. [If you do use the bathroom, you'll notice that it has a pretty sweet shower. Please do *not* turn the shower on for any reason tonight, but if you don't have access to a shower in your daily life, talk to any of us after the show about accessing this one.]

ACTOR PLAYING JESSIE. So! Last thing. A question for everyone. No need to actually answer it, we're not going to make you all sit in silence until someone is brave enough to respond.

ACTOR PLAYING ROSE. Because we're the performers and you're the audience.

ACTOR PLAYING JESSIE. You are performing "audience," which has meaning within the power dynamics of this space.

ACTOR PLAYING ROSE. Although, who gave you your conception of what an audience is? The dictionary? Wagnerian theory?

ACTOR PLAYING JESSIE. The repeated experience of turning around in your seat and glaring at someone whose cell phone goes off in the middle of a show? An action which reinforces the perception that "the audience" is supposed to be invisible to each other, so each person can have an individual emotional experience without being inconvenienced by the individual experience of the person sitting behind you?

*Tiny beat.*

ACTOR PLAYING ROSE. That's not the question, sorry. The question is, how much did you pay to attend this performance? The obvious response is [15 dollars, plus a \$2.78 service charge if you booked online.] Right on. But unless you live within walking distance, or for some insane reason biked here, it cost you a baseline of [\$2.75 to show up. Or \$5.50 if you're also going home afterwards on the subway.]

ACTOR PLAYING JESSIE. And maybe you were like, how the fuck do I kill time before [a 9 P.M. curtain], and the obvious answer was getting drinks in the area, so assuming you ordered two beers not on happy hour, that's close to an additional [20 bucks].

ACTOR PLAYING ROSE. [If it was two glasses of wine, you could be pushing 30?]

ACTOR PLAYING JESSIE. So that's like [18 bucks for the ticket, plus \$5.50, plus like 20 for sustenance beforehand. And maybe before those drinks you were at work and you knew you were going to be out all day and night so you didn't want to lug your tupperware around today, so you got lunch near your job, which in Manhattan let's assume is another 15.]

ACTOR PLAYING ROSE. Anyway, just wondering what it cost you to see this show. Thank you for paying it.

## Scene 2

*The crescendoing sound of earth quaking, cracking, splitting; Pangaea severing, tectonic turbulence and the grand canyons and awesome mountains of North America forming over not ages but moments, deafening so the theater might itself crumble into:*

*Modern mayhem outside a house in the Haight. Bullhorn announcements from police, shouts from civilians, glass breaking. Sean surrounded by beer bottles [that he has drunk to empty], half-filled with turpentine and stuffed with strips from a torn-up shirt. He fills another bottle from the turpentine can, rips another strip off the shirt. Rose and Arthur burst through the front door, wild with adrenaline, holding hands from running through crowds:*

ARTHUR. Holy shit, holy shit, holy shit. (Turning to Rose.) You okay?

ROSE. Yeah, / yeah—

ARTHUR. God, it reeks in here—

*Rose pulls away and turns out to audience as Sean and Arthur freeze where they are, under the Frame of Reference.*

ROSE. San Francisco, September 27, 1966. A white policeman shoots and kills a black unarmed teenager in the ghettoized neighborhood of Bayview-Hunter's Point, setting off three days of racial protests. One month after the first queer- and trans-rights riot in the U.S., at Compton's Cafeteria in the Tenderloin. Exactly one week after the first issue of the San Francisco *Oracle*—what will become the famous chronicler of the “hippie” counterculture—is published. I'm Rose. I'm a painter. I have a degree from the San Francisco Art Institute, and I make puppets and paint sets for a theater company we're all in. That company is getting a little bit famous, because they keep being arrested and saying cool things to the media about what's going down here in 1960s San Francisco. It's “political theater.”

*(Pointing.)* This is Arthur. He just finished his doctorate at Berkeley and calls himself a poet. He writes plays for the theater company. He doesn't talk to me often; he's in love with me. Or he's envious of Sean and that transfers onto me. You'll see.

*(Another gesture.)* That's Sean. Sean is an actor. All of the time. Anything he says might be true or it might be a complete fabrication, and no one can ever tell the difference. He's the kind of person who makes you feel like the only one he's ever told his secrets to, even if you've heard him say the same thing to someone else many times.

*(Jumping back in the play, to Sean.)* Is that my turpentine? What / are you—

ARTHUR. *(Also noticing Sean.)* Sean, what the fuck is this—

SEAN. There's a perfect sightline from the roof to the cop cars below, we can drop these / and the pigs'll never know what hit em.

*Rose starts to grab bottles from Sean...*

ROSE. Sean! Stop it! You're not throwing Molotov cocktails at cops!

*Realizing too what's about to happen, Arthur rushes to help Rose collect the cocktails.*

ARTHUR. Hold the fuck up, Sean. COOL IT.

You drop bombs on cops from a rooftop, what's going to happen?

# FREE FREE FREE FREE

by Haleh Roshan

3 men, 3 women

FREE FREE FREE FREE is based on the true story of the Diggers, an anarchist theater collective formed out of the San Francisco Mime Troupe; the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense and Students for a Democratic Society; and the rise of Asian American solidarity. Each group fights against capital and exploitation, fights for liberation, and envisions an America and a world beyond constant war, immeasurable poverty, and global hunger. But how the #\$\$%! do we, they, we get from here to there? A Brechtian exploration of 1960s Bay Area anti-capitalists and their efforts at igniting a new American revolution, this is a play in perpetual struggle session with itself—but like, in a nice way!

*“Haleh Roshan’s [FREE FREE FREE FREE] shows us a fictionalized portrait of the real-life ’60s activist troupe the Diggers, the utopian collective that tried to envision San Francisco as a postmoney world. The piece emphasizes that, at least once upon a time, radical movements prioritized services [and] the message—that you must materially help the people you fight for—is beyond price.”*

—Time Out New York

## Also by Haleh Roshan

A PLAY TITLED AFTER THE  
COLLECTIVE NOUN FOR  
FEMALE-IDENTIFYING 20-  
SOMETHINGS LIVING IN NYC  
IN THE 2010S

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