

Fall 12-18-2015

Here Goes Nothing: Creating The Role Of Timothy Allgood In "Noises Off."

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Here Goes Nothing:
Creating the role of Timothy Allgood in “Noises Off”

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
In
Film & Theatre Arts
Theatre Performance: Acting

By
Justin Bupp
B.A. Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania, 2010
December 2015

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For everyone that knew I could, even when I didn't.

Acknowledgements

I would first and foremost like to thank my parents, Renee and Carson Bupp without whom my pilgrimage to New Orleans to follow my dream would not have been possible.

To the rest of my family: Thank you for your undying support and, on the rare occasion I return home, making me feel like I never left.

To Dr. Dale J. Young, Ph.D: There is a real chance that I would not be alive, literally and figuratively, if it were not for you. You reminded me what it felt like to be passionate about something again, and made me realize that it's ok to be "weird." The hours spent in your office were the most therapeutic and comforting times of my life. Red noses forever.

To the cast and crew of *Noises Off*: Thank you for being such caring individuals. It was nothing but a joy to meet and work with all of you and I truly hope to get that chance again.

To my committee members: Henry Griffin, you always knew what to say and how to say it so it would make the greatest impact on me, both in and out of the classroom. Kevin Griffith, thank you for being there for me personally and professionally. You've become like family to me and I am forever grateful for that.

To my advisor and director David Hoover: Thank you for taking a chance on me. I was a kid from far away who had no idea who he was or what he was doing and you allowed me to come to UNO and find myself.

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Abstract

Noises Off is the epitome of farce. Doors everywhere, mistaken identities, and unrequited love. The characters push themselves to the limit, both mentally and physically. They stop at nothing to put on their production and their stage manager, Timothy Allgood, becomes the babysitter of the group, which at times becomes comparable to herding cats.

This document describes the journey made from casting to final bows. It contains biographical research on the playwright, Michael Frayn, as well as a historical look at the genre of farce, techniques pioneered by Sanford Meisner and Konstantin Stanislavski, along with materials, including a scored script, character analysis, personal evaluation, and rehearsal reflections.

Keywords: Acting; Stanislavski; Strasberg; Noises Off; Frayn; Bupp; Farce

Introduction

Michael Frayn's *Noises Off* was produced by Theatre13 at Rivertown Theaters for the Performing Arts in Kenner, LA from March 8-24, 2013. The production was directed by David W. Hoover who was assisted by Dexter Rodgers, Stage Managed by Jennifer Billot who was assisted by Sarah Berardi and Kayln Hepting. The designers for the production were Eric Porter (scenic), Linda Freed (costumes), Troy "Scratch" Buckley (lights), Rachel Clegg (props), and Mike Harkins (sound). The role was performed as part of the requirements for obtaining a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Theatre Performance from the University of New Orleans.

Here Goes Nothing is a record of the preparation, performance, and reflection of the production and contains research materials, a character analysis of Timothy Allgod, rehearsal reflections, and a self-reflection. Also included is the scored script used to prepare the role. In addition to being a requirement for completion of the degree, this document is meant to be a research tool for any actor who is looking for assistance in preparing this, or any other role.

Chapter One: Farce

“Comedy is acting out optimism.”

--Robin Williams

Farce

What sets farce apart from other comedic genres is the fact that it centers on the physicality of the performances. The characters in a farce are reach a goal, but one thing after another stands in their way so they come up with new ideas and schemes that do nothing but lead to more chaos. In her book, entitled Farce, Jessica Milner Davis states, “The simplest kind of farce requires little more than a suitable victim, a practical joker and a good idea for a prank” (Davis pg 89). Farce centers around the worst case scenario, or the idea that everything that could go wrong will. “Farce deals with the unreal, with the worst one can dream or dread. Farce is cruel, often brutal, even murderous” (Bermel pg 21). Farce creates an environment that stretches the bounds of reality. Characters have physical damage inflicted upon them, but recover very quickly and carry on, much like Wile E. Coyote of the Looney Toons cartoons. “One of the clauses in an unwritten contract between farceurs and their audiences used to state that the characters will...come out of their ordeals unscathed, because the audience must be permitted to laugh” (Bermel pg 23). Farces are, for the most part, not what people would call “realistic.” Not only because of the physical damage inflicted on the characters, but for the actual events that take place. For example, in the farce *What The Bellhop Saw* by Billy Van Zandt and Jane Milmore, the character Georgie floats away from a hotel window holding only a handful of party balloons which could obviously never happen in “real” life (VanZandt pg 73). Most farces are also relatively prop heavy. This plays into the confusion that fuels the farcical fire. The props almost become characters on their own, like the sardines in *Noises Off*. In this

case, the prop may play a larger role than most, seeing as it is a play within a play. That is what makes “Noises Off” successful as a farce. The props cause problems for the characters and also the characters they are playing in the play within.

Props are not the only technical element that can be pivotal to farce. The set can play a large role as well, more specifically doors and windows. This is used most effectively in bedroom farces like *No Sex Please, We're British* by Alistair Foot and Anthony Marriott and *Donkeys' Years* by Michael Frayn, who used the performing of bedroom farce as his source of inspiration for *Noises Off*. The comedy in these plays comes from multiple characters unknowingly inhabiting the same environment. The characters are usually paired off and contain somewhat of a sexual element, hence the name.

One of the oldest and truest farces is Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. In the play, Lysistrata convinces the women of Athens and Sparta to withhold sex from their men until peace is reached between the two city states. This falls into the category of farce, in part, because of its extremely unrealistic nature. During ancient times, women of Greece would never coordinate with the women of the enemy to make peace. Even in non-militaristic societies like Athens, the preservation of life in the city state was the number one priority, and the women befriending the enemy in any way would compromise that.

Shakespeare is known as much for his comedies as he is for his dramas. “Of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays only fifteen...do not have any farcical scenes or characters in them. These are mostly history plays, either British or Roman. But even among the fifteen, three offer us villains who are all the more sinister for being playful: Richard III, Iago in *Othello*, and Aaron the Moor in *Titus Andronicus*” (Bermel pg 92).

In the middle of the seventeenth century, there was a change in the theatre of England. There was a battle going on between the church and the theatre centered on the morality of the medium. Not only was the subject matter of the plays in question, but also the relationships between the adult male actors and the younger who played the female roles. It looked as though the theatres were finished. With the rise of Puritanism and new ideals in the government, it was made a crime to participate in such activities while there was a war going on. So, on September 6, 1642 every theatre was forced to close its doors. There may have been some travelling troupes that still performed, but there is little to no record of it. The next step in the evolution of farce came from France.

In 1643, the year after the religious revolution in England shut down the theatres, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin gave up a career as a lawyer and began writing plays. He travelled around France with his theatre troupe and most likely crossed paths with travelling comedy troupes from Italy. “Most of Moliere’s early plays contain scenes and characters that lay French names and interpretations on commédia farce routines. They also consist, as do the commedia scenarios, of distinctive turns or acts written for the individual members of the company” (Bermel pg 95-96). Moliere would return to those days later in his career when writing plays such as *Tartuffe*. Moliere not only helped bring farce back from the dead, but gave it a new-found credibility with his dramatic prowess. His work made such an impact that British playwrights began to “adapt” his works, re-writing them to fit their own social situations, which was acceptable then due to lack of copyright law. They emulated Moliere not only because of his comedy, but because of his storytelling ability. “By the end of the seventeenth century no fewer than twenty British playwrights, among them the cream of Britain’s playmakers (Dryden, Otway, Vanbrugh,

Shadwell, Wycherley, and Aphra Behn), had more or less rewritten sundry Moliere plays at least thirty-eight times. And the polite pillaging has continued ever since” (Bermel pg. 96).

The most pivotal time in the development of farce came in the 18th century with Georges Feydeau. Feydeau’s influence can be seen in virtually every successful farce, especially *Noises Off*. He focused on the negative aspect of life, i.e. adultery, physical deformities, and mental faults. For example, “*A Flea in Her Ear*” has a character who must use a false palate, without which he can utter only incomprehensible sounds. Naturally, he knows a piece of information that is vital to the story, and when he leaves his palate soaking in a glass of water, somebody else innocently drinks it down, so that the information is left unsaid” (Bermel pg. 113). Feydeau’s take on adultery is prevalent in *Noises Off*. His work never leads us to believe he feels adultery is acceptable because his adulterous characters don’t have happy endings. “...His characters, especially his middle-aged men, land in hot water, not to say boiling acid, every so often as a result of chasing other men’s wives; but trysts and fleeting rendezvous are what wind them up and keep their lives catastrophic.

Not only the situations, but the character types he used are also often used in farces today, “women of pleasure, painstaking lechers, shrewd wives, fumbling servants, sundry old people well passed their dotage, and bewildered scapegoats, some of them doubles or look-alikes” (Bermel pg. 113), all of which can be found in *Noises Off*. All of that being said, what sets Feydeau apart from the rest of the pack is the fact he took what his predecessors did with storytelling and completely reinvented it. He used the multiple, intertwining storylines and gave them a time limit. He put his characters in a race against time and upped the stakes, creating an urgency which forced them to act without thinking. This only creates more havoc than was already there.

In *Noises Off*, the time limit is set immediately when the audience finds out the play the cast is rehearsing opens the next day. The play within the play also has a time limit that is set when Roger says he's waiting to show the house to a client. He therefore must complete the affair with Brooke and find out who else is in the house, as well as remove them, all before the client arrives. This is another trait that makes *Noises Off* the perfect farce. There are two different stories going on at once, and they both have the "life or death" urgency.

Farce made its way to Russia, but it wasn't until the mid to late nineteenth century. Even Anton Chekhov, the man responsible for ground-breaking works like *The Seagull*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *The Three Sisters*, and *Uncle Vanya*, was a great writer of farce. "Half a dozen of Chekhov's early one-acts consist of farce of the realistic type. Four of them are subtitled 'a joke in one act,' but they all work up a sweat of desperation as some characters try to convey their anguish to others who are too busy with their own anguish to listen" (Bermel pg 107). This is most prevalent in *The Bear* and *The Proposal*.

While Chekhov's works were being brought to life by Stanislavski and his ground-breaking techniques at the Moscow Art Theatre, things were changing in America as well. The film industry was beginning to take shape and no one had more of a hand in bringing farce to a wide audience than Mack Sennett. Sennett started Keystone studios and would bring to America a man who would change the face of comedy forever: a young Englishman by the name of Charles Chaplin. Chaplin's roots were in vaudeville, where he would perform farcical routines as different characters. Sennett had sent Chaplin a letter on two separate occasions, both a year apart, asking him to join Keystone and perform in their films. Chaplin threw both letters away. Only by chance did he embark on a journey that would change the face of comedy forever. "One day, while I was walking down Broadway with a chance acquaintance, we passed the keystone

offices and my companion asked me to come in with him. He had some business with a man there. I went in, and was waiting in the outer office with Mr. Sennett came through and recognized me” (Chaplin pg 114). Sennett asked Chaplin how much money it would take to get him to agree, to which Chaplin made what he thought to be an absurd request of \$200 per week for two years. Much to Chaplin’s surprise, Sennett immediately agreed. His world famous character “The Tramp” made his debut in 1914 and has since become one of the most widely known icons in not only film history, but overall dramatic history.

Once actors began speaking in films, it took the genre to a whole new level. Most notably, the Marx brothers made a great impact on how we find our laughs. “As W.C. Fields practiced aloofness and Laurel and Hardy practiced fraternity, Harpo, Chico, and Groucho practiced upstaging” (Bermel pg 217). They are constantly trying to get the best of one another. A great example of this, which Bermel also describes in his book, is in their film *Duck Soup*. There is a scene in which Groucho runs into and breaks a mirror that is separating two rooms. Once the mirror is broken, Harpo appears in the other room, pretending to be Groucho’s reflection. He is dressed the same and wearing a mustache and glasses identical to Groucho’s. It is a perfect example of the physical precision required to perform farce. The films in the early days through to the likes of Monty Python, rely on a certain physicality being brought to each character. Each character has its own quirks and ticks that play off those of the other characters to create the conflict which fuels the comedy.

There is still the one great difference between film and theatre. In a film, the audience sees what the filmmakers believe to be the best version of a given moment. This means they can use body doubles and record the same action multiple times and from multiple angles until they get the final product they’re looking for. In the theatre, however, you have time to prepare and

rehearse, but when it comes down to it, the actors have one chance to get it right for that specific performance. Audiences laugh through their applause when an actor performs a difficult physical feat on stage during a farce. This exact situation comes about in *Noises Off* when the actor playing Garry must fall down a flight of stairs. This is brought on by the way farces are written. They are written in builds. There are minutes of chaos leading to a beat change, which comes in the form of something physical or a punch line. Because of this aspect, stage farce will continue to not only draw audiences, but will continue to please those audiences for years to come.

Chapter Two: Michael Frayn

*“The Ideas of the great playwrights are almost always
larger than the experiences of even the best actors.”*

--Stella Adler

Michael Frayn

Michael Frayn came from what he describes as a “lower middle” class family (Frayn pg 29). His father was an asbestos salesman whose family was almost entirely deaf, and who would eventually meet the same fate. His mother was a violinist. Even though his mother was his first exposure to the arts, she died when he was twelve, so his father would end up being the greatest influence on his life.

He was born in the London suburb of Mill Hill and moved to Surrey when he was young. He described his birth as “the unexpected result...of a night out together rather than of any conscious planning, which I find rather touching and perhaps the hidden source of my interest later in life in the random and disordered” (Frayn pg 37). He had a knack for writing at an early age that didn't go unnoticed. When he was eight years old, his father read one of his essays for school and told him he could be a journalist. He inherited a bit of that talent from his father who was “a good storyteller, and the colleagues and relatives who [figured] in his stories [became] characters like himself, slightly simplified and larger than life” (Frayn pg 47).

Despite his father's suggestion of journalism, he had other aspirations for young Michael. Frayn's father was intent on turning his son into a world class cricket player. Michael's shortcomings would prevent this from coming even close to fruition. He was never a fast learner, whether it was cricket or driving or anything else. This caused issues between the two. Frayn even said in his book entitled My Father's Fortune, that “My slowness is causing problems...By the time I'm four or five it's already clear that the son-and-heir project is not

going as well as [he] might have hoped. Little Michael's a bit of a disappointment" (Frayn pg 83-84). He blamed the slow learning on poor coordination, and even a bat that may or may not have been too small to hit with, but when Frayn was nine, the truth came out. He had acute astigmatism. He could barely see the ball coming, let alone hit it. He also was what he refers to as "slow witted" (Frayn pg 91). Because of his father's storytelling, along with his lack of athletic ability and slow learning, Frayn steered more toward literature. He makes an interesting statement about finding yourself saying that, "You can back yourself into being who you are just as easily as you can walk or get pushed into it" (Frayn pg 95).

Frayn began writing professionally in the early 1960's writing columns for *The Guardian* and *The Observer*. His columns from the two British newspapers have since been reprinted in several collections. He began writing novels a few years later and received the Somerset Maugham Award for his first novel, *The Tin Men*. The Maugham award is given to the best writers in Britain under 35. He's continued writing novels and non-fiction for the rest of his career, but began writing plays as well. He received the London Evening Standard award and the Laurence Olivier award, both for best comedy, for his first two full-length plays *Alphabetical Order* and *Donkey's Years*, respectively. In 1978, he began his career as Britain's leading Chekhov translator when he translated *The Cherry Orchard*. He would later translate *The Three Sisters*, *Wild Honey*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *The Seagull*. His greatest success, and the work he's most famous for came in 1982.

In 1970, Frayn wrote a collection of one act plays for two actors entitled *The Two Of Us*. One of the plays in the collection was a farce called *Chinamen*. While watching a performance of *Chinamen*, Frayn was enthralled with the action taking place backstage, with the two actors quick changing over and over and the hilarity that ensued. He said of the experience, "it was

funnier from behind than in front and I thought that one day I must write a farce from behind" (Mehlman). In 1982, he did just that when he took what he saw that night in the theatre and transformed it into *Noises Off*.

Since *Noises Off*, Frayn has written many novels, plays, and even non-fiction pieces. *Noises Off* may be what he is best known for, but his other works are not to be over-looked. He has come quite a long way from the disappointing little boy with bad vision but it appears as though his vision is now quite clear.

Chapter Three: Character Analysis

*“The best characters are the ones that somehow manage
to be attractive and repulsive at the same time.”*

--Nicholas Cage

Character Analysis

Timothy Allgood is the definition of a workhorse. He is the member of the theatre company who will do anything and everything in his power to make sure the show goes as smoothly as possible. Throughout the play, this ranges from fixing the set to running errands. He even goes on stage in place of two different actors during the performance. He is 100% team oriented. Everything he does is for the good of the production. It is exactly this that causes most of his conflict throughout the play.

Frayn was both comical and generous to the actors when creating the characters in *Noises Off* by adding an actual bio for the program as if the play were happening in reality. This gives the actor a bit of a back story to start with when developing their character. It helps a great deal, especially when doing farce, because, most times, the lines aren't necessarily as informing as they would be in a drama, or even a different type of comedy. Tim found the theatre as an adult, but jumped right in. He had no theatre background, but "trained for a career in Market Research" (pg 11). This information provided a side of Tim that was very structured and logical, which played very well against the frantic nature of the actors in the company. During performances, Tim is always trying to make sure the actors are in their places and making their entrances as cleanly as possible. A great deal of humor comes from his failure to do so, but he never gives up.

Lloyd: And God said, Where the hell is Tim?

(Enter from the wings TIM, the company stage manager. He is exhausted.)

Lloyd: And where the hell *was* Tim. And God said let there be doors, that open when they open, and close when they close.

Tim: Do something?

Lloyd: Doors.

Tim: I was getting the bananas. For the sardines.

Lloyd: Doors.

Tim: Doors?

Lloyd: I bet God had a stage manager that understood English, too.

Belinda: Tim, my love, this door won't close.

Garry: And the bedroom won't, you know.

Tim: Oh, right. *(sets to work on the doors)*

This exchange is very telling of Tim. It shows his willingness to be assertive and start working on replacement sardines after overhearing an exchange on-stage earlier about using mashed bananas instead. He did not, however, wait to hear the end of the exchange where it is said that

the sardines were not going to be used after all. Despite being in the middle of one project, he drops what he is doing to make sure the problem with the doors is taken care of right away. Only moments after he is finished with the doors, Tim is asked to go on as the burglar in place of Selsdon. The fact he is asked to jump from technical work to performing at the drop of a hat just shows the amount of trust his fellow company members, or at least the director, have in him. Unfortunately, Tim is unable to find the costume needed to go on as the burglar. His next exchange with Lloyd shows, once again, his dedication to the production. Even Lloyd's first line gives us Tim's given circumstances.

(Enter TIM from the wings.)

Lloyd: Tim, you look strained and anxious. You're not trying to do too much are you?

Tim: I can't find the gear. I've looked all through his dressing-room. I've looked all through the wardrobe. *LLOYD indicates SELSDON*) Oh.

Selsdon: Beer? In the wardrobe?

Lloyd: No Selsdon. Tim, you need a break. Why don't you sit quietly upstairs and do all the company's VAT?

Tim: I'll just do the bananas first. *(Exit TIM into the wings.)*

This exchange not only tells of Tim as a person, but also shows a lot about how he is seen by Lloyd.

Tim's relationship with Lloyd is not a simple one. On one hand, he is very overworked by Lloyd, as seen in the last exchange where Lloyd's idea of Tim taking a break is doing the company's taxes. It is also apparent when he immediately chooses Tim to help Frederick with his costume, not even thinking about the fact he's already on-stage as Frederick's double. On the other hand, he confides in Tim enough to tell him all of the issues he's having with his production of *Richard III* in London. Lloyd orders Tim around, but he knows Lloyd is depending on him not only professionally, but personally as well. This aspect of their relationship comes out in Act 2 when Lloyd entrusts Tim with the task of buying flowers for Brooke to cheer her up so she will perform. It is this task that provides the majority of the comedy for the character. He rushes back and forth between the theatre and a flower shop buying several different bouquets that end up in everyone's hands except Brooke, most notably Poppy, whom Lloyd warned him to avoid.

Act 2 provides the most dialogue for Tim, and in turn, shows the audience more of who he is as an individual, rather than how he fits into the company. The act takes place backstage for one of the performances and it is a time of great worry for Tim. There have been quarrels between cast members that have left their status uncertain. Garry thinks Dotty has a relationship with Frederick behind his back, while the love triangle between Poppy, Lloyd, and Brooke only escalates when flowers start being handed out. On top of all that, Selsdon insists on wandering off to drink whiskey during the performance. He knows the production is not on the right track, and expresses his concern to Poppy at the top of the act.

Poppy: You know what Dotty's like.

Tim: We've only been on the road for a month! We've only got to Goole! What's it going to be like by the time we've got to Stockon-on-Tees?

Tim is left with the dilemma of finding flowers for Lloyd to give to Brooke, while at the same time keeping all of the actors in their places and civil long enough to get through the performance. There is never a moment during the performance where Tim gives up, but he comes about as close as one can to giving up when Garry ties Frederick and Brooke's costumes together so they pull each other in opposite directions (pg 136-137). Tim can't believe one of the actors would go so far as to sabotage the entire show to spite another actor, but he quickly remembers his entrance and rushes to put his own costume on. To his dismay, it is snatched from him by Lloyd and thrown to Frederick to use. Now with no costume for his entrance, Tim looks to Lloyd for help, only to be rushed on-stage wearing an overcoat backward. It's not pretty, but he managed to get everyone, including himself, through the performance.

Act 3 is what can easily be considered a stage manager's nightmare. Tim's goal for the act quickly becomes "Just get through it." Everything that could possibly go wrong with the production does. Right at the start of the act, things are already out of place. Tim is on-stage working on props when the curtain comes up and he must rush off before Dotty comes on. Later in the performance, Tim comes on for Frederick because of an accident backstage. Tim is not a performer and this is the point where the audience can see this. Tim knows the lines for Frederick's part, but his acting ability is very minimal. I played with the idea that somewhere along the way, Tim may have taken a beginner's acting class, so he would try to mimic Frederick's delivery and movements as closely as possible, but fail miserably. I only looked

directly at the audience when speaking and used big, rigid hand gestures. He simply wanted to do the scene, and get off stage as soon as possible. He must do it again, however, and this time it is for Selsdon. He goes as the burglar expecting an empty stage like it says in the script, but he is horrified to find the entire cast waiting for him. He is immediately pulled into whatever unscripted plotline the cast is following. Not being an actor, he simply stands there and says nothing until he hears something familiar. This causes issues when Selsdon, who is the actual burglar, and Lloyd both enter dressed for the part. Tim and Lloyd follow the script, and the three end up performing part of the burglar simultaneously. They realize there is no usable phone on-stage, at which time Tim snaps back into stage manager mode and rushes off to find one. While searching for a phone, he hears his cue to enter as Frederick's double and rushes on. However, the script has long gone out the window and Tim just exits and pulls the final curtain, which also doesn't work.

It is because of all the mishaps, drama, and never ending failure that, in my mind, Tim never works in the theatre again after the run of this production. If he were to work in theatre again, I'm sure it would only be with Lloyd or Poppy. Tim is the only one who really knows what's going on in Lloyd's life both personally and professionally. He seems to trust Lloyd blindly and he would drop everything to help him. Poppy is his right hand lady throughout the entire production and other than Poppy's personal dilemmas, they're the glue that holds the production together. They both perform multiple characters in the play within and without them, the production would have been a disaster.

Chapter Four: Rehearsal Reflections

“All the real work is done in the rehearsal period.”

--Donald Pleasence

Rehearsal Reflections

There are many issues an actor may run into while preparing a role. They may have trouble with blocking, lose their voice, or maybe even get sick. All of these happened to me while preparing to play Timothy Allgood in *Noises Off*. It may come across as cliché, but the show really must go on. We, as actors, have a responsibility to our cast, crew, and craft to put forth our utmost effort in order to reach the goal of putting on a successful production.

We started rehearsing at the very beginning of the semester, and I happened to be taking a voice class. I had no idea at the time how influential that class would be toward my performance. Being the beginning of a new semester, I was not exactly accustomed to the rigors of my schedule. I was taking classes, working in the scene shop, and rehearsing almost every day. This took an immediate toll on me, both physically and mentally. Having the voice class most definitely helped me to build my respiratory stamina and kept breathing and vocal warmups fresh in my mind. I also had a 20-30 minute commute to rehearsal, during which I could do vocal exercises so when I arrived at rehearsal, I could focus on stretching and breathing exercises. In a show as physically demanding as *Noises Off*, it is very important to take good care of your body. I failed to do so in an adequate fashion and actually almost lost my voice during the rehearsal process. I was screaming a lot during the super bowl, which made my voice very hoarse. It also led to coughing fits, which does not mix well with stage performance. I had to keep a sweatshirt with me backstage to cough into so as not to distract my cast mates.

In order to combat this, I changed my diet and tried as hard as I could to talk as little as possible outside of rehearsal. I kept cough drops in my pocket at all times so I would cough less,

thus allowing my throat to heal. Changing my diet and sleeping as much as possible also helped a great deal, but what helped the most was advice given to me by a fellow cast member. Trina, the actress playing Belinda, recommended a type of organic herbal tea that was specifically designed to help with throat issues. I drank several cups every day with honey added and it helped a great deal. Sometimes, despite our greatest efforts, things just go wrong. Not too long after I was having trouble with my voice, I actually got sick and had to miss two rehearsals. While this hindered my ability to rehearse the show itself, it did give me time to really work on my lines and learn about my character. Even though I could not physically rehearse, I still owed it to my fellow cast members and my director to be as prepared as possible when I did finally return.

Even when health is not an issue, there are plenty of road blocks we, as actors, run into during rehearsal. Sometimes, it can be conflicting views on how a certain moment should play out. While rehearsing *Noises Off*, I ran into that exact problem. There is a comic bit in Act 2 that required my character to shuffle props between multiple characters. When I read the bit in the script, I thought it was hilarious. When it came time to block the bit, our director decided to change the order in which the props were handed from one person to another. My immediate reaction was discomfort and I thought the change took away from the comedy. However, being a respectful actor, I did as requested and moved on. After rehearsing the bit several times, it became clear to me the simplification of the exchange took nothing away from the comedy of the bit. There was also an instance when my director had to reposition another actor to make a long, fast cross easier for me. We may not always like when something gets changed because we can't pull it off the way it's written, but we must always trust our directors and their vision because they are the ones who have focused their energy on the big picture.

This was true on another occasion during our rehearsal process when I was asked to completely change the energy of my character. Being the stage manager of the company, Tim is constantly being pulled in different directions by different people. Sometimes it gets to be too much for him. My instinct was to express this frustration with slightly more aggression than he usually shows. After talking with my director, he felt that it would be more interesting if Tim's sensitivity took over and he was pushed to the verge of a breakdown, rather than being the aggressor. He was exactly right. This added another layer to two different relationships Tim has in the play. The change allowed him to connect more with Poppy, the other stage manager, who was a more sensitive character for the majority of the play. It also added a great contrast to the aggression of the director with whom Tim has a close relationship.

From time to time, dialect will be thrown into the mix. In *Noises Off*, all of the characters are English. For our particular production, we did not have a dialect coach, so we were left on our own to come up with how our characters would speak. Tim is an educated man, and quite sensitive, so I gave him a more proper English dialect and spoke with a calm, soft tone. Even when Tim gets worked up about something, I still never truly raised my voice. I felt it aided in showing the audience his lack of dominance and, much like his reaction to turmoil, added to the contrast between he and the director. In order to gain a consistency with my dialect, I began rehearsing my lines on my own with no dialect at all. Once I decided where I wanted to go with the dialect, I began reading my lines out loud with the dialect, but much slower than I would say them on stage. This allowed me to focus on the specificity of each sound the individual words made. I also over-announced everything while rehearsing on my own. This acted as an exercise in muscle memory for my mouth and tongue.

Every once in a while, especially in the academic arena where funds and rehearsal time could be hard to come by, we may run into issues with props or the set. In a farce, this can be especially frustrating because of how important the props and set are. During *Noises Off*, as is common with a lot of farce pieces, there is a great deal of going on and off stage through doors and windows, along with props being switched and misplaced. The biggest hurdle was our doors. The doors were one of the last things added to the set, and it was pretty late in the process, so we spent a great deal of time miming them. There's actually a big difference between miming a door and actually opening one, both physically speaking and in regards to timing. In order to avoid any miscues, I made sure to take several minutes during my warm up to work with each door I used during the show. This meant approaching, opening and closing each door from on and off stage. It's something that may seem so small and easy, but when in the heat of the moment, you need to know how each door opens and closes.

As an actor, there are many obstacles to overcome throughout a production. Some are smaller than others, but they are all equally as important to the success of the production. Whether it is vocal, physical, structural, or mental, we need to find a way to persevere and overcome. We're all different, and different methods work for different people, but one thing will always be the same: the show must go on.

Chapter Five: Self-Evaluation

*“The real man smiles in trouble, gathers strength
from distress, and grows brave by reflection.”*

--Thomas Paine

Self-Evaluation

Leading up to this production, I was feeling a mix of emotions. I was very excited because I'd heard how incredibly funny this play was and how fun it is to do, but at the same time, I was quite intimidated. I have a great deal of confidence in my ability, but I knew I would be working with a cast of not only more experienced, but award-winning actors. I'm the type of person who doesn't put much thought into the idea of awards, but having seen these actors' work before; I knew I would have my work cut out for me. It could not have been more of a blessing. I have never met a more collaborative, inviting, and supportive group of actors in my life. My role in the show was not one of the larger roles, but the collaborative nature of the play itself, along with the attitudes of the other actors, it turned out to be one of the greatest learning experiences of my life.

When I first read the script and saw I had little stage time in Acts one and three, I knew I would have to bring something extra to make my time on-stage count. That being said, I also had to keep in mind not to go too far. "Assume what's in a script is there on purpose. Assume the writer knew what he or she was doing. If you trust the play enough to stage it, trust its author" (Ball pg 83). I also knew I had a great deal to do in Act 2, so my character would have his chance to be explained to the audience. I also realized after we started really working scenes that Tim is really what holds the company together and he is handed the task of controlling the chaos that ensues throughout the play. This is a bit of a change for me as an actor because in plays like this, I am rarely the straight character. My character wasn't the one with all the funny

lines or all the funny physical bits, but he served a specific purpose. My job was to figure out what it was and show that to the audience. Sanford Meisner says in his book *On Acting* that, “The first thing you have to do when you read a text is find yourself—*really* find yourself. First you find yourself, then you find a way of doing the part which strikes you as being in character. Then, based on that reality, you have the nucleus of the role” (Meisner pg 178). I used my anxiety about the production to fuel Tim’s reality and I feel it made for a great base to work from.

While my technique is based in Meisner’s teachings and the use of actions as described in *A Practical Handbook For The Actor*, I am of the belief system that you can never have too many tools. I liken it to going into battle during the 18th century. You knew you were going to stand face to face with the enemy and fire straight on, but you needed more than just muskets. You needed cannons, horses, swords, or anything else that can inflict damage. I use the same idea when looking at acting. I use Meisner’s “moment to moment” concept a great deal, but I rely heavily on Stanislavski’s magic “if.” In *An Actor Prepares*, Stanislavski says to a student, “...all action in the theatre must have an inner justification, be logical, coherent and real...*if* acts as a lever to lift us out of the world of actuality and into the realm of imagination” (Stanislavski pg 49). Using these two concepts, along with Uta Hagen’s concept of substitution, which “applies technically to an individual moment of the play when the given material fails to stimulate you sufficiently, and you must search for something that will trigger an emotional experience and send you into the immediate action of the play” (Hagen pg 35), I was able to find a personal connection with the character I was playing and could then use that to fuel my actions.

The hardest part of the production was the physical nature of the script. Being a farce, the play revolved more around the physical comedy than lines. There was a great deal of

running around, going on and off stage, and prop shuffling. I had some difficulty with one of my prop heavy moments in which I went back and forth between a table and grabbing flowers from someone. It took a while to get the movement down, but after moving the other actor a bit closer and a little more focus, it ended up being a really great moment in the show that got laughs every night. That's the biggest reward for me when doing a comedy. There's no better feeling than the big laugh you get after working a bit over and over until it's just right. I had a little trouble at first figuring out how Tim felt about all of the madness happening around him. I started off playing an angered frustration and I'm glad David stopped me because, looking back, it really made Tim's interactions very stagnant. It made it seem like he didn't want to be there anymore, which was the exact opposite of how he felt. Once David had me soften him up, it provided much more room to play. Something I've been guilty of all through my graduate studies is not consciously playing actions. I've been caught by an acting teacher on several occasions not knowing what action I'm playing. I would know what my character is thinking and feeling at the time, but I wouldn't have it simplified to one playable action. Now, having worked on the same character for nearly three months, I feel I have a better understanding of why that is necessary, and will continue to try to grow in that aspect of my craft.

This production, as I said before was one of the great learning experiences in my life. I have a re-found confidence in myself I didn't think I would ever have again. I feel I have not only become a better actor on-stage, but I take myself more seriously as an actor off-stage and that is something I will always keep with me.

Sometimes when putting together a production, you can feel when it's going to be "good." I think we all had that feeling while we were rehearsing, and I know it felt that way when the show closed. We were not the only ones who felt that way. Our production of *Noises*

Off received five nominations at the 2014 Big Easy Theater Awards. The Big Easy Theater awards are, more or less, the Tony Awards for local theater in New Orleans. Our production received nominations for Best Comedy, Best Director of a Comedy (David Hoover), Best Supporting Actor in a Comedy (Jimmy Murphy), Best Supporting Actress in a Comedy (Tracey Collins), and Best Set Design (Eric Porter). Out of the five nominations, we took home two awards, Best Comedy and Best Director of a Comedy. All nominations and wins were well-deserved and proved that hard work and passion can be recognized, not only by fellow cast mates and crew members, but by the public as well.

Along with success, also comes failure. There was an aspect of my performance in which I failed. I wanted the audience to see that Lloyd needed Tim more than Tim needed Lloyd. Which his work ethic and attention to detail, Tim could work in any theatre he desired, but he stayed with Lloyd because he wanted to. I feel my performance did not entirely show this part of their relationship. I believe my performance did show Tim's work ethic and attention to detail, as well as his loyalty and compassion, but I also believe that in showing this, I made Tim appear weaker than I had intended.

Appendices

Appendix I: Production Photos



“The Master Plan”



“Lost In Transportation”



“Return To Sender”



“Success Requires Discipline”



“...”



“Guess Who”

Appendix II: Production Documents

NOISES OFF

Called the greatest farce
comedy ever written.

March 8 -24

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or
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for the
performing arts
325 Minor St.
Kenner



Directed by David Hoover

Starring Gary Rucker, Tracey Collins, Mike Harkins, Chrissy Garrett,
Trina Beck, Jimmy Murphy, Brittany Chandler, Justin Bupp, Michael Martin

Noises Off – Rehearsal dates. This will alter as I know everyone’s conflicts. It seems like we are starting very early, which we are, but that is due to the lost dates in February. There are obviously few things I can rehearse without everyone so I need to know all conflicts with these dates and I will work from there.

| | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Mon. Jan. 7 – 7:00 | Feb. 17 – 10:00-1:00 |
| 8 – 7:00 | Mon. Feb. 18 – 7:00 |
| 9 – OFF | 19 – OFF (opening of Orestes) |
| 10- 7:00 | 20 - OFF |
| 11 – 7:00 | 21 – 7:00 |
| 12 – 10:00-1:00 | 22 – 7:00 |
| 13 – 10:00-1:00 | 23 – 10:00-1:00 |
| Mon. Jan. 14 – 7:00 | 24 – 10:00-1:00 |
| 15 – 7:00 | Mon. Feb. 25 – 7:00 |
| 16 – OFF | 26 – OFF |
| 17 – 7:00 | 27 – 7:00 (w/o David) |
| 18 – OFF | 28 – 7:00 (w/o David) |
| 19 – 10:00-1:00 | March 1 - OFF |
| 20 – 10:00-1:00 | 2 – TBA (keep open) |
| Mon. Jan. 21 – 7:00 | 3 – Tech/Dress |
| 22 – 7:00 | Mon. March 4 - Dress |
| 23 – OFF | 5 - Dress |
| 24 – 7:00 | 6 - Dress |
| 25 – 7:00 | 7 – Dress (invited audience??) |
| 26 – 10:00-1:00 | 8 – Opening Night |
| 27 – 10:00-1:00 | |
| Mon. Jan. 28 – 7:00 | |
| 29 – 7:00 | |
| 30 – OFF | |
| 31 – 7:00 | |
| Feb. 1 – 7:00 | |
| 2 – OFF | |
| 3 – OFF (SuperBowl) | |
| Mon. Feb. 4 – 7:00 | |
| 5 – 7:00 | |
| 6 – 7:00 | |
| 7 – OFF (Mardi Gras) | |
| 8 – OFF (MG) | |
| 9 - OFF (MG) | |
| 10 – OFF (MG) | |
| Mon. Feb. 11 – OFF (MG) | |
| 12 – OFF (MG) | |
| 13 – 7:00 | |
| 14 – OFF | |
| 15 – 7:00 | |
| 16 – 10:00-1:00 | |

Appendix III: Scored Script

Noises Off

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

by Michael Frayn



SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.
45 WEST 25TH STREET NEW YORK 10010
7623 SUNSET BOULEVARD HOLLYWOOD 90046
LONDON TORONTO

Have beer
bring on coffee
for two days

~~Hammer in a nail~~

Top/Mark

28 NOISES OFF

(Enter from the wings TIM, the company stage manager. He is exhausted.) SL bathroom

And where the hell was Tim. And God said, Let there be doors, that open when they open, and close when they close.

Tim. Do something? ~~What is he?~~ Find him

LLOYD. Doors.

Tim. I was getting the bananas. For the sardines.

LLOYD. Doors.

Tim. Doors?

LLOYD. I bet God had a stage manager who understood English, too.

BELINDA. Tim, my love, this door won't close.

GARRY. And the bedroom won't, you know.

Tim. Oh, right. (sets to work on the doors)

BELINDA. (To LLOYD:) He hasn't been to bed for forty-eight hours..

LLOYD. Don't worry, Tim. Only another twenty-four hours, and it'll be the end of the day. (LLOYD comes up on stage.)

BELINDA. Oh, look, he's come down on earth amongst us.

LLOYD. Listen. Since we've stopped anyway. OK, it took two days to get the set up, so we shan't have time for a dress rehearsal. Don't worry. Think of the first night as a dress rehearsal. If we can just get through the play once tonight for doors and sardines. That's what it's all about. Doors and sardines. Getting on—getting off. Getting the sardines on—getting the sardines off. That's farce. That's the theatre. That's life.

BELINDA. Oh God, Lloyd, you're so deep.

LLOYD. So just keep going. Bang, bang, bang. Bang you're on. Bang you've said it. Bang you're off. And everything will be perfectly where's Selsdon?

This work
try to recreate
them not

Objective Keep Lloyd happy
Obstacles Lloyd's love triangle
 Garry & Dotty's relationship
 Selsdon's drinking

NOISES OFF

29

BELINDA. Oh God.

GARRY. Oh God oh God oh God.

BELINDA. Selsdon!

GARRY. Selsdon!

LLOYD. Poppy!

DOTTY. (To LLOYD:) I thought he was in front, with you?

LLOYD. I thought he was round the back, with you? (Enter POPPY from the wings.) Is Mr. Mowbray in his dressing-room? (Exit POPPY into the wings.)

FREDERICK. Oh, I don't think he would. Not at a technical. (To BROOKE:) Would he?

BROOKE. Would who?

GARRY. Selsdon. We can't find him!

FREDERICK. I'm sure he wouldn't. Not at a technical.

DOTTY. Half a chance, he would.

BROOKE. Would what? (GARRY, DOTTY and LLOYD make gestures to her of tipping a glass, or raising the elbow, or screwing the nose.)

BELINDA. Now come on, my sweets, be fair! We don't know.

FREDERICK. Let's not jump to any conclusions.

LLOYD. Let's just get the understudy dressed. Tim!

~~Tim. Yes!~~

LLOYD. Hurry up with those doors. You're going on for Selsdon.

~~Tim. Oh. Right.~~

DOTTY. He shouldn't have been out of sight! I said, he must never be out of sight!

BELINDA. He's been as good as gold all the way through rehearsals.

GARRY. Yes, because in the rehearsal room it was all, I don't know, but there we were, do you know what I mean?

Exit USC
Downstairs

SL
Door

Enter USC
Upstairs

LLOYD. You mean you could see everyone.

GARRY. And here it's all, you know.

LLOYD. Split into two. There's a front and a back. And instantly we've lost him.

(Enter POPPY from the wings.)

POPPY. He's not in his dressing-room.

DOTTY. You've looked in the lavatories?

POPPY. Yes.

DOTTY. And the scenery dock and the prop room and the paint store?

POPPY. Yes.

FREDERICK. *(To DOTTY:)* You've worked with him before, of course.

LLOYD. *(To POPPY:)* Ring the police. *(Exit POPPY into the wings. To TIM:)* Finished the doors? Right, get the gear on.

Yes, now what?

(Exit TIM into the wings. Enter SELSDON MOWBRAY from the back of the stalls. He is in his seventies, and is wearing his burglar gear. He comes down the aisle during the following dialogue, and stands in front of the stage, watching everyone on it.)

I'm sorry, Dotty, my love.

DOTTY. No, it's my fault, Lloyd, my love.

LLOYD. I cast him.

DOTTY. 'Let's give him one last chance,' I said. 'One last chance!' I mean, what can you do? We were in weekly rep together in Peebles.

GARRY. *(To DOTTY:)* It's my fault, my precious—I

DOTTY. Where have you been, Selsdon?

BELINDA. Are you all right, Selsdon?

LLOYD. Speak to us!

SELSDON. Is it a party?

BELINDA. 'Is it a party?'

SELSDON. Is it? How killing! I got it into my head there was going to be a rehearsal. (*He goes up on to the stage.*) I was having a little postprandial snooze at the back of the stalls so as to be ready for the rehearsal.

BELINDA. Isn't he lovely?

LLOYD. Much lovelier now we can see him.

SELSDON. So what are we celebrating?

BELINDA. 'What are we celebrating?'

(Enter TIM from the wings.) SV

LLOYD. Tim, you look strained and anxious. You're not trying to do too much, are you?

~~TIM. I can't find the gear. I've looked all through his dressing-room. I've looked all through the wardrobe.~~ to plead

(LLOYD indicates SELSDON.) Oh wave

SELSDON. Beer? In the wardrobe?

LLOYD. No, Selsdon. Tim, you need a break. Why don't you sit down quietly upstairs and do all the company's VAT?

~~TIM. I'll just do the bananas first.~~ (Exit TIM into the wings.) USC front door

BELINDA. He has been on his feet for forty-eight hours, Lloyd.

LLOYD. (*calls*) Don't fall down, Tim. We may not be insured.

SELSDON. So what's next on the bill?

LLOYD. Well, Selsdon, I thought we might try a spot of rehearsal.

Bar around
waiting and he
was there for
while time

to correct

NOISES OFF

67

MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, we get them all the time, love. They're just Arab sheets.

ROGER. I'm sorry about this. (*He opens the door to the mezzanine bathroom.*) But in here . . .

FLAVIA. Arab sheets?

(*Exit FLAVIA into the bedroom. Enter the BURGLAR from the mezzanine bathroom.*)

ROGER. In here we have . . .

BURGLAR. Ballcocks, governor. Your ballcocks have gone.

ROGER. Oh, we have him. (*Enter FLAVIA from the bedroom.*)

FLAVIA. They're *Irish* sheets! Irish linen sheets off my own bed!

MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, the thieving devils!

ROGER. In the *study*, however . . .

MRS. CLACKETT. You give me that sheet, you devil! (*She seizes the nearest sheet, and it comes away in her hand to reveal VICKI.*) Oh, and there she stands in her smalls, for all the world to see!

ROGER. It's you!

FLAVIA. It's her! (*FLAVIA comes downstairs menacingly. Exit PHILIP discreetly into the study.*)

BURGLAR. It's my little girl!

VICKI. Dad!

(*FLAVIA stops. Enter PHILIP from the study in amazement. He is now played by a double.*)

BURGLAR. Our little Vicki, that ran away from home, I thought I'd never see again!

MRS. CLACKETT. Well, would you believe it?

Keep sheet
closed.

SNEAK

VICKI. (To BURGLAR:) What are you doing here like this?

BURGLAR. What are you doing here like that?

VICKI. Me? I'm taking our files on tax evasion to Inland Revenue in Basingstoke. (PHILIP collapses behind the sofa, clutching at his heart, unnoticed by the others.)

FLAVIA. (threateningly) So where's my other sheet?

(Enter through the front door the most sought-after of all properties on the market today—a SHEIKH. He is wearing Arab robes, and bears a strong resemblance to PHILIP, since he is played by the same actor.)

SHEIKH. Ah! A house of heavenly peace! I rent it!

OMNES. You!

FLAVIA. Is it?

FREDERICK. Lloyd, sorry, but I've still got my trousers round my ankles. It's just frightfully difficult doing a quick-change without a dresser.

LLOYD. Get Tim to help you. Tim! Where's Tim? Come on, Tim! Tim! (TIM, wearing the sheet as PHILIP's double, gets to his feet and gazes (blearily) at LLOYD.)

TIM. Sorry?

LLOYD. Oh, yes. You're acting.

TIM. I must have dropped off down there.

LLOYD. Never mind, Tim.

TIM. Do something?

LLOYD. No, let it pass. We'll just struggle through on our own. Tim has a sleep behind the sofa, while all the rest of us run round with our trousers round our ankles. OK, Freddie? From your entrance, with trousers round

No
real

Indistinct
viewer
thought

x
y
z

(They sit BROOKE down with her head between her knees.)

SELDON. Well, that's something *she* didn't know!

BELINDA. Hush, love.

DOTTY. Two weeks' rehearsal, that's all we've had.

FREDERICK. Whatever next?

SELDON. *Most exciting!*

BELINDA. Sh! (*indicates BROOKE*)

SELDON. Oh, yes. Sh!

DOTTY. Here he comes. (*Enter LLOYD from the wings, subdued.*) Is she all right, love?

LLOYD. She'll be all right in a minute. Something she ate, probably.

GARRY. (*indicates BROOKE*) Yes, this one's feeling a bit, you know.

LLOYD. I'm feeling a bit, you know, myself. I think I'm going to . . .

BELINDA. Which?

GARRY. (*offers chair*) Faint?

BELINDA. (*offers vase*) Or be sick?

LLOYD. . . . Need that tea-break.

DOTTY. You're certainly overdoing it at the moment, love.

LLOYD. So could we just have the last line of the act?

SELDON. Me? Last line? Right. 'But I'll tell you one thing, Vicki.'

VICKI. What's that, Dad?

BURGLAR. When all around is strife and uncertainty, there's nothing like . . . (*He takes MRS. CLACKETT's plate.*) . . . a good old-fashioned plate of sardines!

LLOYD. And *curtain!* (*Pause. Then TIM realises, and hobbles hurriedly into the wings.*)

CURTAIN

This wakes you.

See what's happening on stage

II
ACT ONE

*The living-room of the Brents' country home.
Wednesday afternoon. (Theatre Royal, Goole.
Wednesday matinee, February 13.)*

But this time we are watching the act from behind; the whole set has been turned through 180 degrees. All the doors can be seen—there is no masking behind them. Two stairways lead up to the platform which gives access to the doors on the upper levels. Some of the scene inside the living-room is visible through the full-length window. There are also two doors in the backstage fabric of the theatre: one giving access to the dressing-rooms, and the pass door into the auditorium. TIM is walking up and down anxiously in his dinner jacket. POPPY is speaking into the microphone in the prompt corner.

POPPY. (over the Tannoy) Act One beginners, please. Your calls, Miss Otley, Miss Ashton, Mr. Lejeune, Mr. Fellowes, Miss Blair. Act One beginners, please.

TIM. And maybe Act One beginners is what we'll get.

What do you think?

POPPY. (To TIM:) Oh, she'll pull herself together now we've called Beginners. Now she knows she's got to be on stage in five minutes. Won't she?

TIM. Will she?

POPPY. You know what Dotty's like.

TIM. We've only been on the road for a month! We've only got to Goole! What's it going to be like by the time we've got to Stockton-on-Tees?

POPPY. If only she'd speak!

*pull support from her
set chairs to names
to 20 in
X de...*

force

to warn

He could
give you instructions
if anything.

Lloyd's instructions
are new, but you
must tell him what
happened.

76

NOISES OFF

LLOYD. (*takes money out of his wallet and gives it to TIM*) There's a flower-shop just across the road at the back. I want you to buy me some very large and expensive-looking flowers.

~~TIM. Right. Now Dotty's locked herself up in her dressing-room. . .~~

LLOYD. Don't let Poppy see them.

~~TIM. No. And she won't speak to anyone. . .~~

LLOYD. First house finishes just after five, yes? Second house starts at seven-thirty? I want two hours alone and undisturbed with Brooke in her dressing-room between the shows, then I'm on the 7.25 back to London.

to give
attention
to reiterate

~~TIM. Lloyd, that's what I'm trying to tell you—there may not be a show!~~

LLOYD. She hasn't walked out already?

~~TIM. No one knows what she's doing! She's locked in her dressing-room! She won't speak to anyone!~~

LLOYD. You've called Beginners?

~~TIM. Yes!~~

LLOYD. I can't do it in five minutes. It's not physiologically possible.

~~TIM. She's had bust-ups with Garry before, of course.~~

LLOYD. Brooke's had a bust-up with Garry?

~~TIM. Brooke? Not Brooke—Dotty!~~

LLOYD. Oh, Dotty.

~~TIM. I mean, they had the famous bust-up the week before last, when we were playing Worksop.~~

LLOYD. Right, right, you told me on the phone.

~~TIM. She went out with this journalist bloke. . .~~

LLOYD. Journalist—yes, yes. . .

~~TIM. But you know Garry threatened to kill him? — to challenge~~

LLOYD. Killed him, yes, I know. Listen, don't worry about Dotty—she's got money in the show.

~~TIM. Yes, but now it's happened again! Two o'clock~~

to justify

in but did
you know
this?

NOISES OFF

77

to search for direction
this morning I'm woken up by this great banging on my door. It's Garry. Do I know where Dotty is? — She hasn't come home.

LLOYD. Tim, let me tell you something about my life. I have the Duke of Buckingham on the phone to me for an hour after rehearsal every evening complaining that the Duke of Gloucester is sucking boiled sweets through his speeches. Catesby is off every afternoon doing a telly, and the Duke of Clarence is off for the entire week doing a commercial for Madeira. Richard himself — would you believe? — Richard III has now gone down with a back problem. Then last night Brooke rings me to say she's very unhappy here, and she's got herself a doctor's certificate for nervous exhaustion. I have no time to find or rehearse another Vicki. I have just one afternoon, while Richard is fitted for a surgical corset and Lady Anne starts divorce proceedings, to cure Brooke of nervous exhaustion, with no medical aids except a little whisky — you've got the whisky? — a few flowers — you've got the money for the flowers? — and a certain fading bedside manner. So I haven't come to the theatre to hear about other people's problems. I've come to be taken out of myself, and preferably not put back again.

to stop
Tim. Yes, but Lloyd...

LLOYD. Have you done the front of house calls?

to apologise
Tim. Oh, the front of house calls! (TIM hurries to the microphone in the prompt corner, still holding the money and whisky. He puts the whisky down to switch on the microphone.)

LLOYD. And don't let Poppy see those flowers! (Exit LLOYD through the pass door.)

Tim. (into microphone) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The curtain will rise in three minutes.

to soothe

more melodic

let it bubble up

Big Flip

Show both

Tears not anger

What does all this mean to you?

One thing after another

Higher pitched

(Enter POPPY from the dressing-rooms.)

POPPY. We're going to be so late up!

~~TIM. No luck?~~

POPPY. Belinda's having a go. I haven't even started the front of house calls yet . . . Money? Is this for me?

~~TIM. No, not~~ (He puts the money behind his back and automatically produces the whisky with his other hand.)

POPPY. Whisky!

~~TIM. Oh . . . Is it?~~

POPPY. Where did you find that?

~~TIM. Well . . .~~ to search

POPPY. Not up here? Oh, my God, he's hiding them up here now! (She takes the whisky.) I'll put it downstairs where he won't find it. (Enter BELINDA from the dressing-rooms.) No?

BELINDA. You know what Dotty's like when she's like this. Freddie's trying now . . . (She sees the whisky.) Oh, my God.

POPPY. He's hiding them up here now. (Enter FREDERICK from the dressing-rooms.) No?

FREDERICK. No.

BELINDA. You didn't try for very long, my precious!

FREDERICK. No, well . . . (He sees the whisky.) Oh dear.

BELINDA. He's hiding them up here now. (Exit POPPY to the dressing-rooms, holding the whisky.)

FREDERICK. No, Garry came rushing out of his dressing-room in a great state. I couldn't quite understand what he was saying. I often feel with Garry that I must have missed something somewhere. You know how stupid I am about that kind of thing. But I think he was saying he wanted to kill me.

X down
of
Try to remember tasks.

X SR

to distract

to distract

Don't take eyes off whiskey

Find reasons to reveal items

NOISES OFF

79

BELINDA. Oh, my poor sweet!

FREDERICK. I thought I'd better leave him to it. I don't want to make things worse. He's all right, is he?

BELINDA. Who, Garry? Anything but, by the sound of it!

FREDERICK. I mean, he's going on?

~~TIM. Garry? Garry's going on. Of course he's going on. What's all this about Garry not going on?~~

BELINDA. Yes, because if you have to go on for Garry, Poppy can't go on for Dotty, because if Poppy goes on for Dotty, you'll have to be on the corner!

~~TIM. Oh my God. (He taps his left hand anxiously with the money in his right.)~~

BELINDA. Money.

~~TIM. Money?~~

BELINDA. Is that for us?

~~TIM. No, that's for . . . Oh, my God! (Exit TIM to the dressing-rooms.)~~

FREDERICK. She's a funny woman, you know—Dotty. So up and down. She was perfectly all right last night.

BELINDA. Last night?

FREDERICK. Yes, she took me for a drink after the show in some club she knows about.

BELINDA. She was with you? You were with her?

FREDERICK. She was being very sympathetic about all my troubles.

BELINDA. She's not going to sink her teeth into you! I won't let her!

FREDERICK. No, no, she couldn't have been nicer. In fact she came back to my digs afterwards for a cup of tea, and she told me all her troubles. Sat there until three o'clock this morning—I don't know what the landlady thought! (Enter POPPY.)

X missing name

to please

to show

Let this stop you.

to demand to search for hope

to distract

POPPY. And another thing.
 BELINDA. Nothing else, my sweet!
 POPPY. Where's Selsdon?
 BELINDA. It turns out that it's Freddie here who's the cause of all the . . . Selsdon?
 POPPY. He's not in his dressing-room.
 BELINDA. Oh my God!
 POPPY. Oh my God, the front of house calls!
 BELINDA. You do the calls. I'll look for Selsdon.
 FREDERICK. What shall I do?
 BELINDA. (*firmly*) Absolutely nothing at all.
 FREDERICK. Right.
 BELINDA. You've done quite enough already, my pet.

(Exit BELINDA to the dressing-rooms.)

POPPY. (*into the microphone*) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The curtain will rise in three minutes.

(Enter TIM from the dressing-rooms, carrying a large bunch of flowers.)

Tim. He wants to kill someone.
 POPPY. Selsdon wants to kill someone?
 Tim. Garry, Garry . . . Selsdon?
 POPPY. We've lost him.
 Tim. Oh my God.
 POPPY. Flowers!
 Tim. (*embarrassed*) Oh . . . Well . . . They're just . . .
 You know . . .
 POPPY. (*takes them*) Oh, Tim, that's really sweet of you!

Try to keep flowers
to punch
to clarify
to cooperate
to justify
 Watch Flower Pleading

180° for calls.

NOISES OFF

81

TIM. Oh ... Well ...

to cover up

POPPY. (To FREDERICK:) Isn't that sweet of him?

FREDERICK. Very charming. (She kisses TIM.)

POPPY. I'll just look in the pub. (She gives the flowers to FREDERICK.) Hold these. (Exit POPPY to the dressing-rooms.)

to camera

TIM. I'll take those. (takes the flowers) Oh, the front of house calls! Hold these. (gives the flowers back to FREDERICK)

Take

FREDERICK. Oh, I think Poppy's done them.

to camera

TIM. She gave them two minutes, did she? I'll give them one minute. (into the microphone) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The curtain will rise in one minute. (takes the flowers from FREDERICK)

to sooth

FREDERICK. Oh dear, I think she said three minutes.

to chair

TIM. Three minutes? I said three minutes! She said three minutes?

GET THERE!

FREDERICK. I think so.

to Harry

TIM. Hold these. (gives FREDERICK the flowers; into microphone) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The curtain will rise in two minutes.

Back to flowers

(Enter BELINDA from the dressing-rooms, holding the bottle of whisky.)

FREDERICK. Any luck?

BELINDA. No, but I found this.

FREDERICK. Oh dear.

TIM. Oh ...

BELINDA. It was quite cunningly hidden behind the fire-extinguishers.

FREDERICK. Not a good sign.

to minutes
 TIM. I'll take it. *Start X to Bel*

BELINDA. Yes, and put it somewhere out of sight, my sweet!

to distract
 (Enter POPPY from the dressing rooms. ~~TIM conceals the whisky from her.~~)

POPPY. He's not in the pub.

~~TIM. You've checked the green room?~~ *laundry list*

BELINDA. Yes.

~~TIM. I'll check it again. (Exit TIM to the dressing rooms, with the whisky.)~~

BELINDA. Now what?

POPPY. (into the microphone) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The curtain will rise in two minutes.

FREDERICK. Oh dear. Tim's already told them two minutes.

POPPY. He's done two minutes? (into the microphone) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The curtain will rise in one minute.

(Enter LLOYD through the pass door.)

LLOYD. What the fuck is going on?

BELINDA. Lloyd!

FREDERICK. Great Scott!

POPPY. I didn't know you were here!

LLOYD. I'm *not* here! I'm in London! But I can't sit out there and listen to 'two minutes'—'three minutes'—'one minute'—'two minutes'!

BELINDA. My sweet, we're having great dramas downstairs!

LLOYD. We're having great dramas out there! (To

SELSDON. Oh, yes, every word!

POPPY. Right. *(into the microphone)* Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats. The performance is about to begin. *(Enter TIM from the dressing-rooms.)*

~~TIM. They're coming.~~ *we can breathe*

BELINDA. And we've found Selsdon.

~~TIM. (To SELSDON:) How did you get here?~~

SELSDON. How?

~~TIM. (into microphone) Ladies and gentlemen, will you please take your seats.~~ *to 40/41*

POPPY. I've done it, I've done it!

~~TIM. (into microphone) The performance is...~~ *oh* *- over speaker*

BELINDA. Poor Lloyd! He'll choke on his toffees.

SELSDON. You want to know how? Amiss, that's how!

~~TIM. What?~~

SELSDON. How did she take it? In one word? Amiss! 'It's always the same thing,' she cries.

(Enter GARRY from the dressing-rooms.)

BELINDA. Garry, my sweet!

SELSDON. 'You try to give some poor devil a leg up.' Or she may have said, 'a leg over . . .' Oh, and here he is.

FREDERICK. *(To GARRY:)* Are you all right? *(FREDERICK collects the box and flight bag from the props table, and offers them to GARRY, who snatches them angrily.)*

SELSDON. What does he say?

BELINDA. He's not saying anything, Selsdon, my sweet.

SELSDON. Very sensible. Only stir it up again. 'I've seen you at it!'—that's what he kept saying downstairs.

X SM table
 (Enter DOTTY from the dressing-rooms.) 'I know when you've got your claws into someone,' he says, 'and you've got them into poor old Neddy!'

BELINDA. Dotty, my love!

SELSDON. Oh, she's emerged, has she? Come on, old girl! You're on!

FREDERICK. Are you all right?

SELSDON. Is she all right? (DOTTY merely sighs, and smiles, and gives a little squeeze of the arm to BELINDA. She takes up her place by the service quarters entrance, a tragically misunderstood woman. GARRY moves pointedly away.)

BELINDA. (To SELSDON:) She's fine.

to drink - check
~~TIM. All right, everyone?~~ *check*

SELSDON. Or maybe it was Eddy. Neddy or Eddy—one of the two.

BELINDA. Hush, love.

POPPY. Curtain up? (Everyone looks anxiously from DOTTY to GARRY and back again. DOTTY and GARRY both ignore the looks. They stand aloof, then both, at the same moment, turn to check their appearance in the little mirrors fixed to the back of the set.)

FREDERICK. Look, Dotty—look, Garry—I'm not going to make a great speech, but we *have* all got to go out there and put on a performance, and, well . . .

BELINDA. We can't do it in silence, my loves! We're going to have to speak to each other! (Pause. Neither GARRY nor DOTTY has apparently heard.)

✓ DOTTY. (Suddenly, to TIM:) What's the house like?

BELINDA. That's the spirit!

FREDERICK. Well done, Dotty!

to follow
 TIM. It's quite good. Well, for a matinee. *Dotty!*

POPPY. There's quite a crowd at the front of the back stalls.

Don't have time for this.

~~Tim. No . . . well . . . no . . .~~

LLOYD. Tim, have you ever heard of such a thing as jealous rage?

~~Tim. Yes . . . well . . . yes . . .~~

LLOYD. Then take five pounds of your own money, Tim, and go out to the florists and buy some flowers for me! Gave Poppy the flowers! You two could have Freddie's old brain—you could have half each. *(Exit LLOYD through the pass door.)*

FREDERICK. Oh dear.

BELINDA. Don't cry, Poppy, love.

SELSDON. Just get the old bus on the road.

POPPY. *(over Tannoy)* Act One. Curtain up.

(She presses a buzzer, and the act begins. [Note: the act that follows is a somewhat condensed version of the one we saw rehearsed.])

(As the curtain rises, the award-winning modern telephone is ringing.)

(DOTTY makes her entrance. There is a sound of scattered applause.)

(Enter from the service quarters MRS. CLACKETT, a housekeeper of character. She is carrying an imposing plate of sardines.)

(SELSDON, BELINDA and FREDERICK express silent relief that the show has at last started. They subside on to the chairs.)

MRS. CLACKETT. It's no good you going on. I can't open sardines and answer the phone. I've only got

(TIM takes his wallet and checks his money. He goes to exit, but stops and turns when BELINDA points out to the others GARRY sighing heavily as he waits for his entrance. FREDERICK puts the whisky down on his chair and goes across to GARRY, BELINDA and TIM watch apprehensively as FREDERICK gives GARRY's arm a silently sympathetic squeeze.)

(GARRY shakes him off indignantly.)

one pair of hands. *(She puts the sardines on the telephone table by the sofa, and picks up the phone.)*
Hello . . . Yes, but there's no one here, love . . . No Mr. Brent's not here . . . He lives here, yes, but he don't live here now because he lives in Spain . . . Mr. Philip Brent, that's right . . . The one that writes the plays, that's him, only now he writes them in Spain
. . . No, she's in Spain, too, they're all in Spain, there's no one here . . . Am I in Spain?
No, I'm not in Spain, dear. I look after the house for them, only I go home at one o'clock on Wednesday, so that's where I am . . . No, because I've got a nice plate of sardines to put my feet up with, and they've got colour here, and it's the royal what's it called—the royal you know—where's the paper, then . . . ?

What's his problem? His time.

X by Bel

(*BELINDA hurries across to draw FREDERICK off.*)

(*FREDERICK cannot understand what he has done to cause offence. He demonstrates what he did by giving GARRY's arm another squeeze.*)

(*GARRY drops his props and threatens to hit FREDERICK.*)

(*FREDERICK covers his nose. BELINDA and TIM separate them, and urge GARRY back to the front door. TIM goes off towards the dressing-rooms.*)

(*She searches in the newspaper.*)

. . . And if it's to do with letting the house then you'll have to ring the agents, because they're the agents for the house . . . Squire, Squire, Hackham and who's the other one . . . ? No, they're not in Spain, they're next to the phone in the study. Squire, Squire, Hackham, and hold on, I'll go and look.

(*She replaces the receiver.*)
Always the same, isn't it. Soon as you take the weight off your feet, down it all comes on your head.

(*Exit MRS. CLACKETT into the study, still holding the newspaper. The sound of a key in the lock. The front door opens. On the doorstep stands ROGER, holding a cardboard box. He is*

Get him
in place
then place
props

her entrance.)

(Enter MRS. CLACKETT from the study. She is carrying the first plate of sardines.)

MRS. CLACKETT. *(To herself:)* Sardines here. Sardines there. It's like a Sunday school outing.

(BROOKE makes her exit, and BELINDA runs up to the platform to ask her where SELSDON is.)

(ROGER pushes VICKI through the first available door, which happens to be the linen cupboard.)

Oh, you're still poking around, are you?

(BROOKE points in the direction of the dressing-rooms.)

ROGER. Yes, still poking—well, still around.

MRS. CLACKETT. In the airing-cupboard, were you?

ROGER. No, no. *(The linen cupboard door begins to open. He slams it shut.)* Well, just checking the sheets and pillowcases. Going through the inventory. *(He starts downstairs.)*

(Enter TIM from the dressing-rooms with a second, smaller, bunch of flowers. Exit BELINDA to the dressing-rooms in haste.)

ROGER. Mrs. Blackett . . .

MRS. CLACKETT. Clackett, dear, Clackett. *(She puts down the sardines beside the other sardines.)*

*360
to watch
Bel exit
X Fred*

(TIM asks FREDERICK where she is going.)

(FREDERICK demonstrates raising the elbow.)

(Enter BELINDA from the dressing-rooms. She demonstrates that SELSDON has locked himself in somewhere.)

(PHILIP says his line.)

(TIM hands BELINDA the flowers, and dashes out to the dressing-rooms.)

(She gives the flowers to FREDERICK and fetches the fireman's axe from the fire point.)

(She is going to rush off to the dressing-rooms)

ROGER. Mrs. Clackett. Is there anyone else in the house, Mrs. Clackett?

MRS. CLACKETT. I haven't seen no one, dear.

ROGER. I thought I heard voices.

MRS. CLACKETT. Voices? There's no voices here, love.

ROGER. I must have imagined it.

PHILIP. *(off)* Oh my God!

(ROGER, with his back to her, picks up both plates of sardines.)

ROGER. I beg your pardon?

MRS. CLACKETT. *(mimics PHILIP)* Oh my God!

ROGER. Why, what is it?

MRS. CLACKETT. Oh my God, the study door's open. *(She crosses and*

Freeze

(He puts the sardines down— one plate on the telephone table, where it was before, one near the front door—and goes towards the study, but stops at the sound of urgent knocking overhead.)

(BELINDA is going to follow him, but then realises that there is no knocking because BROOKE is still off.)

Knocking!

(GARRY, on stage repeats the cue.)

Knocking . . . ! Knocking . . . ?
Upstairs!

(BELINDA realises what's wrong, and knocks on the set with a prop.)

(runs upstairs; knocking)
Oh my God, there's something in the airing cupboard!

(Only BROOKE doesn't make her entrance, because she is still off.)

(Unlocks it and opens it; enter VICKI.)

(GARRY comes through the linen cupboard door to look for BROOKE.)

ROGER. Oh, it's you.

(GARRY improvises.)

Is it you . . . ? I mean, you know, hidden under all the sheets and towels in here . . . I can't just stand here and, you know, indefinitely . . .

(BELINDA tells POPPY

Enter for axe

see, and cuts three pages of script. He panics, unable for a moment to think where he is, then enters through the airing-cupboard instead of the bedroom.

Everyone backstage panics: "Where are we?" POPPY desperately turns over the pages of the book to find the new place, while people look over her shoulder. Enter TIM from the dressing-rooms leading SELSDON who is holding his trousers up. TIM is holding the axe and the whisky. He hands the whisky to FREDERICK.)

ROGER. Don't panic! Don't panic!

(Enter ROGER, and goes downstairs.)

There's some perfectly rational explanation for all this. I'll fetch Mrs. Splootchett and she'll tell us what's happening. You wait here . . . You can't stand here looking like that . . . You wait in the study . . . Study, study, study!

Enter
Set Sel.
You / wait here
Study

(Exit ROGER into the service quarters. VICKI opens the study door. There is a roar of exasperation from PHILIP, off. She turns and flees.)

(FREDERICK, roars with surprise.)

VICKI. Roger! There's something in there! Where are you?

(There is another cry from

(*FREDERICK* hastily conceals the whisky under the chairs and makes his entrance.)

TIM gives the axe to *LLOYD* and takes the flowers from *DOTTY*, who snatches them right back, leaving *TIM* with only one. He hands this to *LLOYD*, who hands it to *BROOKE*. She peers at it as it keels sadly over. *LLOYD* gives money to *TIM*, who exits wearily to the dressing-rooms.)

PHILIP, off. Exit *VICKI* blindly through the front door.)

(Enter *PHILIP* from the study. He is holding the tax demand in his right hand, and one of the plates of sardines in his left.)

PHILIP. Darling, I know this is going to sound silly, but . . .

(He struggles to get the tax demand unstuck from his fingers, encumbered by the plate of sardines.)

(Enter *FLAVIA* along the upstairs corridor, carrying various pieces of bric-a-brac.)

FLAVIA. Darling, if we're not going to bed I'm going to clear out the attic.

PHILIP. Darling, I can't come to bed! I'm glued to a tax demand!

FLAVIA. Darling, why don't you put the sardines down?

Axe
Flower
Whisky
Flower

back
step
for
Brooke

Wait for \$

Cox of AP
scuffle
X of chairs
US

(Enter TIM with a third, very small, bunch of flowers. He gives them to LLOYD, very insistent that they are put into his hands directly.)

X
acted
to
chair

(LLOYD hands the flowers to BELINDA while he deals with SELSDON. SELSDON conceals the whisky in the fire-bucket, while LLOYD is distracted by BELINDA.)

(SELSDON demonstrates that his hands are empty. LLOYD searches him.)

Notice
Br. &
react
to
kiss

(BELINDA hands the axe to TIM and gives LLOYD a grateful kiss. Enter FREDERICK from the dressing-rooms, bringing BROOKE back. She peers at the spectacle of BELINDA, with flowers, kissing LLOYD.)

plugs it in, and closes the front door.)

MRS. CLACKETT. Flown about? No, the things move themselves on their own two feet, just like they do in any house.

ROGER. I'll tell the prospective tenant. She is inspecting the study. (He opens the study door and then closes it again.) There's a man in there!

Mrs. CLACKETT. No, no, there's no one in the house, love.

ROGER. (opens the study door) Look! Look! He's . . . searching for something.

Mrs. CLACKETT. (glances briefly) I can't see no one.

ROGER. You can't see him? But this is extraordinary! And where is my prospective tenant? I left her in there! She's gone! My prospective tenant has disappeared! (He closes the study door, and looks round the living room. He sees the

*Motion
for
the
Ax
to
Fred
US or Brooke*

(TIM, seeing this, hands the axe to FREDERICK, and wearily holds out his hand for money. LLOYD wearily gives him his last small change.)

(Exit TIM to the dressing-rooms. BELINDA suddenly realises that her flowers are attracting jealous attention, and puts them on POPPY's table with the other flowers.)

(BROOKE turns to go back to the dressing-rooms, again. LLOYD stops her, and looks round for some token of his affection to give her instead of the flowers.)

(FREDERICK, tidily putting the axe back on the firepoint, finds the whisky and holds it aloft—another bottle!)

(SELSDON takes the

sardines on the telephone table.) Oh my God.

MRS. CLACKETT. Now what?

ROGER. There!

MRS. CLACKETT.

Where?

ROGER. The sardines! MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, the sardines.

ROGER. You can see the sardines, can you?

MRS. CLACKETT. I can see the sardines. (ROGER touches them cautiously, then picks up the plate.)

I can see the way they're going, too.

ROGER. I'm not letting these sardines out of my hand. But where is my prospective tenant? (He goes upstairs, holding the sardines.)

MRS. CLACKETT. I can see I'm going to be opening sardines all night, in and out of here like the cuckoo on a clock.

(Exit MRS. CLACKETT into the service quarters.)

ERICK and DOTTY, moves to attack FRED-ERICK.)

(Exit VICKI into the bedroom.)

BURGLAR. I knew I shouldn't have brought the subject up.

(But GARRY is still hobbled, and FRED-ERICK has to make his entrance.)

(Exit BURGLAR into the open door of the mezzanine bathroom. Enter PHILIP through the front door.)

(GARRY tries to get BROOKE to untie him. But she has to make her entrance.)

PHILIP. Darling! Help! Where are you?

(Enter VICKI from the bedroom, holding the nightdress, followed by ROGER. Exit PHILIP hurriedly into the downstairs bathroom.)

ROGER. Just put it on! It's a start, at any rate! I'll find a bottom—I'll find a top—I'll find something.

(TIM enters from the dressing-rooms, carrying a cactus, which he gives to LLOYD. GARRY cries out at the sight of

(Exit ROGER into the bedroom. Exit VICKI into the mezzanine bathroom. Enter VICKI from the mezzanine bathroom.)

That will have to do

cactus as he passes her on the way to make his entrance.)

(BROOKE comes down from the platform holding the cactus. DOTTY pulls a cactus needle out of LLOYD's bottom.)

(BROOKE stands gazing in amazement as LLOYD lowers his trousers and bends over, while DOTTY pulls needles out of his bottom. BELINDA watches the scene from the platform. So does GARRY. ~~TIM warns LLOYD that GARRY is hobbling downstairs again. LLOYD quickly he pulls up his trousers. TIM takes the cactus from BROOKE before GARRY can get it and use it again.~~)

*Run
to
Brooke*

*Phil
to
Lloyd*

cry of pain, along the upstairs corridor. Enter ROGER from the bedroom, directly in PHILIP's path. PHILIP holds up the nightdress up in front of his face.)

ROGER. Don't keep waving that thing in my face! I'm trying to find something! I'll look in the other rooms.

(Exit ROGER along upstairs corridor.)

PHILIP turns to go back downstairs. The mezzanine lavatory flushes. He stops. Enter the BURGLAR from the mezzanine bathroom, holding two gold taps.)

BURGLAR. One pair gold taps, anyway . . .

(He stops at the sight of PHILIP.) Oh my Gawd!

PHILIP. Who are you?

BURGLAR. Me? Fixing the taps.

PHILIP. Tax? Income tax?

(FREDERICK makes his exit and picks up the bedsheets which are waiting for him and BROOKE to put on. He flaps them at BROOKE from the platform to remind her about her change.)

(BROOKE peers at the flapping sheets, and turns to go. But LLOYD detains her while he takes the cactus from TIM and gives it to her, explaining that it is a token of his continuing affection. She peers at it, and he takes in the nature of the present for the first time himself. He turns in pained query to TIM, who gestures that it was all the shop had left—all the rest of their stock is now on POPPY's desk. FREDERICK flaps the sheets in desperation.

(Enter ROGER from the mezzanine bathroom. Exit PHILIP into the bedroom.)

ROGER. A man!

(Enter the BURGLAR from the mezzanine bathroom.)

BURGLAR. Just doing the taps, governor.

ROGER. Attacks? Not—attacks on women?

BURGLAR. Try anything, governor, but I'll do the taps on the bath first. *(Exit the BURGLAR into the mezzanine bathroom.)*

ROGER. Sex criminals everywhere! Where is Vicki? Vicki . . . ?

(Exit ROGER into downstairs bathroom. Enter BURGLAR from mezzanine bathroom, heading for the front door.)

BURGLAR. People everywhere! I'm off. A tax on women? I don't

holding the cactus. He and the cactus together make things worse.)

(FREDERICK and BROOKE miss their entrance. GARRY watches with pleasure, until LLOYD tells him to go on and hold the fort. He improvises.)

(Enter ROGER through the front door.)

ROGER. No sheikh yet? thought he was coming at four? I mean, it's nearly, you know, four now . . . Well, it's after three . . . Because I've been standing here for a good, you know, it seems like forever . . . What's the time now? It must be getting on for, you know . . . it must be getting on for five . . .

Oh, you're here already, hiding in the, anyway . . . And this is your charming wife? So you want to see over the house now, do you, Sheikh? Right. Well. Since you're upstairs already . . .

(LLOYD subsides into a chair and takes a pill.)

Prop table
swap
copy
(TIM puts the sheet on, ready to go on as PHILIP's double. LLOYD makes him take it off again, and passes it up to FREDERICK as an alternative costume. But FREDERICK has no time to put it on, because he is dragged on through the bedroom door by BROOKE.)

ROGER. (*He ushers PHILIP and VICKI away from MRS. CLACKETT towards the mezzanine bathroom. He opens the door to the mezzanine bathroom.*) But in here . . .

FLAVIA. Arab sheets?

(*Exit FLAVIA into the bedroom. Enter the BURGLAR from the mezzanine bathroom.*)

ROGER. In here we have . . .

BURGLAR. Ballcocks, governor. Your ballcocks have gone.

ROGER. Oh, we have him.

(*Enter FLAVIA from the bedroom.*)

FLAVIA. They're *Irish* sheets! Irish linen sheets off my own bed!

MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, the thieving devils!

ROGER. In the *study*, however . . .

MRS. CLACKETT. You give me that sheet, you devil!

(*LLOYD gives up. TIM, in burnous and dinner-jacket, wants to know what he is supposed to wear. LLOYD improvises Arab robes for him by putting his raincoat on him back to front.*)

(She seizes the nearest sheet, and it comes away in her hand to reveal VICKI.)

(FREDERICK makes his exit—with BROOKE, since he is still all of piece with her.)

(FLAVIA comes downstairs menacingly. Exit PHILIP discreetly into the study.)

(SELSDON improvises a line.)

BURGLAR. It's my little girl! So far as I could see before she went.

(BROOKE gets back on.)

VICKI. Dad!

(TIM makes his entrance.)

(FLAVIA stops. Enter PHILIP from the study in amazement. He is now played by a double.)

(FREDERICK tries to disentangle himself from the sheets. LLOYD helps him do a double quick change. FREDERICK turns round just as LLOYD crams the burnous on to his head so that it hangs over his face instead of his neck. LLOYD crams the SHEIKH's dark glasses over the burnous just in time for FREDER-

BURGLAR. Our little Vicki, that ran away from home, I thought I'd never see again!

(PHILIP collapses behind the sofa, clutching at his heart, unnoticed by the others.)

FLAVIA. *(threateningly)* So where's my other sheet?

you please take your seats. The performance is about to . . . oh.

*Abbie
before Poppy
is done*

(She stops because the curtain has risen to reveal ~~TIM~~ checking the props on stage. The curtain hovers uncertainly, then descends. When it rises again, the stage is empty and the telephone is ringing. Enter from the service quarters MRS. CLACKETT, pursued by BELINDA's foot. She is carrying an imposing plate of sardines, and she is limping painfully.)

MRS. CLACKETT. It's no good you going on. I can't pick sardines off the floor and answer the phone. I've only got one leg. *(into phone)* Hello . . . Yes, but there's no one here, love . . . No, Mr. Brent's not here . . . He lives here, yes, but he don't live here now because he lives in Spain . . . *(She tries to examine her knee as she talks.)* Mr. Philip Brent, that's right . . . The one that writes the plays, only why he wants to get mixed up in plays God only knows, he'd be safer off in the lion's cage at the zoo . . . No, she's in Spain, too, they're all in Spain, there's no one here . . . Am I in Spain? No, I'm not in Spain, dear, I'm in agony. That's where I am. One moment I'm standing there with a plate of sardines, next moment she's kicked me on the kneecap and there's sardines all over the floor. *(The plate tips as she rubs her knee, and the sardines slide unnoticed on to the floor.)* Here we are, we haven't been going three months, and already she's lashing out with her feet, and here am I, I don't know where I am, I'm eating sardines off the floor with one knee, don't tell us they've gone again . . . *(She looks round for the sardines.)* . . . and if you want anything else you'll have to

ROGER. I beg your pardon?

MRS. CLACKETT. (mimics PHILIP) Oh my God! (She crashes things about on the sideboard in imitation of the offstage crash, and ends the performance with a wailing groan.)

ROGER. Why, what is it?

MRS. CLACKETT. The study door's open. (She crosses and closes it.)

ROGER. They're going to want these inside the . . . (indicates the study) So I'll put them outside the . . . (indicates the front door) Then they can, do you know what I mean?

(Exit ROGER through the front door, carrying the bag and box. Enter FLAVIA from the mezzanine bathroom, carrying a first-aid box. She sees the linen cupboard door swinging open as she passes, and pushes it shut, so that the latch closes. The handle comes off in her hand.)

FLAVIA. Nothing but flapping doors in this handle.

(Exit FLAVIA into the bedroom, holding the first-aid box and the handle. Enter from the study PHILIP, holding a tax demand and its envelope. The part is now being played not by FREDERICK but by TIM.)

PHILIP. ' . . . final notice . . . steps will be taken' . . . distraint . . . proceedings in court . . .'

MRS. CLACKETT. Oh my Lord, who are you?

PHILIP. I'm Philip.

MRS. CLACKETT. You're Philip? What's happened to you?

*Use Clap
or Fred.
Imitate Fred's
movements*

to imitate

Handwritten notes

*Work harder
to overcome
fear. Let Dotty
be your safety
net.*

Only need gestures when
not on script

Looks
Gestures!

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PHILIP. Well, there were these sardines on the floor . . .

MRS. CLACKETT. And he stepped in it!

PHILIP. And I slipped . . .

MRS. CLACKETT. She's killed him! She's killed you!

PHILIP. No. He's just a bit shaken. I'll be all right in a minute. (Exit MRS. CLACKETT to the study.) You weren't going to tell me a gentleman had come about the house, were you?

MRS. CLACKETT. (off) What?

PHILIP. You weren't going to tell me a gentleman had come about the house?

(MRS. CLACKETT from the study.)

MRS. CLACKETT. That's right. A gentleman come about the house.

PHILIP. Don't tell me. I'm not here.

MRS. CLACKETT. You haven't done himself an injury, then?

PHILIP. Leave everything to Squire, Squire, Hackham, and Dudley.

MRS. CLACKETT. All right, love. Oh, and he's put your box out in the garden for you.

PHILIP. Let them do anything. Just so long as you don't tell anyone we're here.

MRS. CLACKETT. So I'll just sit down and turn on the . . . sardines, I've forgotten the sardines! (finds the sardines on the table, where they should be) Oh, no, I haven't, I've remembered the sardines! What a surprise! I must go out to the kitchen and make another plate of sardines to celebrate. (Exit MRS. CLACKETT to the service quarters.)

PHILIP. I didn't get this! I'm not here. I'm in Spain. But if I didn't get it I didn't open it.

Never
leave her
side.

Circle
around chairs
and DSL

to lead
to push
to sit

Trying to
imitate
Frederick

NOISES OFF

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(Enter FLAVIA from the bedroom. She is holding the dress that VICKI arrived in, and the handle of the linen cupboard.)

FLAVIA. Darling . . . (She stares at TIM in surprise, then recovers herself and looks at the dress.) I never had a handle like this, did I?

PHILIP. (abstracted) Didn't you? *to please*

FLAVIA. I shouldn't buy anything as brassy as this . . . (FLAVIA drops the dress and attempts to replace the handle on the linen cupboard behind her back.) Oh, it's not something you gave me, is it?

PHILIP. I should never have touched it. *to imitate*

FLAVIA. No, it's lovely.

PHILIP. Stick it down. Put it back. Never saw it. (Exit *to imitate* PHILIP into study.)

FLAVIA. Well, I'll put it in the attic, if anyone else wants to have a try.

(Exit FLAVIA along the upstairs corridor, taking the handle but leaving the dress on the floor. Enter ROGER through the front door, without the bag and box.)

ROGER. All right, all right . . . Now the study door's open again! What's going on? (He goes towards the study, but stops at the sound of urgent knocking overhead.) Knocking! (knocking) Upstairs! (runs upstairs; knocking) Oh my God, there's something in the . . . (discovers the lack of a handle) Oh my God! (knocking) Listen! I can't, because the handle seems to have, you know. You'll just have to . . . (He demonstrates pushing; knocking.) Come on! Come on! (knocking) I mean, whatever it is in there. Can you hear me? Dar-

Stay on items

FLAVIA. *I'll* tell you what's happening.

ROGER. There's a man in there! Yes?

FLAVIA. He's not in there, my precious—he's in here, look, and so am I.

MRS. CLACKETT. No, no, there's no one in the house, love. Yes?

FLAVIA. No, look, I know this is a great surprise for everyone. I mean, it's quite a shock for *us*, finding a man lying at the bottom of the stairs! *(To PHILIP:)* Isn't it, darling?

PHILIP. Oh dear.

FLAVIA. But now we've all met we'll just have to—well, we'll just have to introduce ourselves! Won't we, darling?

PHILIP. Oh dear. Oh dear.

FLAVIA. This is my husband. I'm afraid he hates surprises! So, darling, why don't you go off and get that bottle marked poison in the downstairs loo? That eats through anything.

PHILIP. Eats through anything. Right. Thank you. Thank you. Yes, I've heard of people getting stuck with a problem, but this is ridiculous.

(He opens the downstairs bathroom door to go off. A pane of glass drops neatly out of the mullioned window, and an arm comes through and releases the catch. The window opens, and through it appears the BURGLAR, played by TIM.)

←BURGLAR. No bars. No burglar alarms. They ought to be prosecuted for incitement. *(He climbs in, and looks round in surprise to find the room full of people.)*

MRS. CLACKETT. Come in and join the party, love.

LLOYD. OK, OK. I'll think of something. *(Takes out his pills. To MRS. CLACKETT:)* Fetch the sardines!

MRS. CLACKETT. I've fetched the sardines!

LLOYD. You've fetched the sardines?

OMNES. She's fetched the sardines!

PHILIP. Oh dear.

LLOYD *(To PHILIP:)* Get the tax demand!

OMNES. He's got the tax demand!

LLOYD. Right, then, I suggest . . . *(takes a pill)* I suggest . . . *(FLAVIA hands him a glass of whisky to wash the pill down. He gulps at the whisky without thinking.)* I suggest . . . *(He becomes unable to speak or breathe, and only now realises that it's whisky he has swallowed.)*

BURGLAR SELSDON. We're doing it, are we?

FLAVIA. What?

BURGLAR SELSDON. Richard III? *(Lloyd tries to speak.)*

MRS. CLACKETT. What's he saying?

FLAVIA. He's saying . . . ring the police!

ROGER. Ring the police?

OMNES. Ring the police! *(ROGER picks up the receiver, finds the body of the phone missing, and hands the receiver to LLOYD.)*

ROGER. It's for you. *(LLOYD puts the receiver to his ear and tries to dial.)*

FLAVIA. No phone?

MRS. CLACKETT. *(To TIM:)* Fetch a phone!

TIM. Fetch a phone? *(Exit TIM through the front door.)*

FLAVIA. Here's the phone!

ROGER. We've found the phone! *(LLOYD puts the receiver back on top of the phone. At once it rings.)*

~~(Enter TIM from the open downstairs bathroom, dressed in the black sheets.)~~

TIM. (uncertainly) Come on?

MRS. CLACKETT. Oh, and here's the mother of the bride!

TIM. Go off?

OMNES. (demonstrating) Pull the shades! ~~(EXIT TIM into the wings.)~~

BURGLAR SELSDON. Last line?

OMNES. Last line!

BURGLAR SELSDON. (crosses to VICKI) But I'll tell you one thing, Vicki. (Slaps her on the back, and she loses her lenses.)

OMNES. What's that, Dad?

BURGLAR SELSDON. When all around is strife and uncertainty, there's nothing like . . . (takes the sardines) . . . a good old-fashioned plate of curtain!

(Down comes the curtain—and jams just above the level of their heads. As one man they seize hold of it and drag it down to the ground.)

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Vita

Justin Bupp was born in Baltimore, Maryland on December 17, 1986. Having never met his biological father, he and his mother are very close. She married on December 18, 1987 and Justin was soon adopted by her husband. He attended Dallastown Area Senior High School in Dallastown, Pennsylvania where he played baseball all four years. An athlete for his entire life, the switch to the arts was quite a surprise to some, but to those that knew him well, it made sense. The change came while Justin attended Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania, originally as a communications major. He graduated from Lock Haven with his B.A. in Theatre in May 2010, and moved to New Orleans that August to begin his studies at the University of New Orleans.

While attending the University of New Orleans, Justin appeared in various productions ranging from original one acts to Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, in which he played Lucentio. Also while at UNO, Justin worked as a Graduate Assistant in the scene shop and served as a Teaching Assistant for an Acting I class.

Since performing in *Noises Off*, Justin has appeared in various short plays, one-acts, and staged readings around New Orleans. As of the completion of this project, he is still pursuing his acting career both on stage and on film.