The Ritual

Samir Yazbek

translated by Mark O'Thomas

Characters
in order of appearance:

Joel, *Márcia's boyfriend, nineteen years of age*
Mauro, *Bianca's boyfriend, eighteen years of age*
Celso, *Ana's brother, fifteen years of age*
Ana, *Celso's sister, sixteen years of age*
Bianca, *Mauro's girlfriend, seventeen years of age*
Lia, *eighteen years of age*
Márcia, *Joel's ex-girlfriend, eighteen years of age*

With the exception of Márcia, all the characters in the play attend the same college.

Location

Various places.

Action

During the course of a month.

Scene One

A city square. **Joel** *is sitting with his mobile in his hand. He appears unsure whether or not to make a call. Enter* **Mauro**.

Mauro Well, then?

Joel (*looking at his phone*) Well, what?

Mauro What are you doing here alone?

Joel Thinking.

Mauro Are you all right?

Joel I am. Are you?

Mauro Yep.

Joel And how's it going with Bianca?

Mauro She's doing fine.

Joel What about you guys?

Mauro What of it?

Joel Are you doing all right?

Mauro I think so.

Joel You 'think'?

Mauro What are you getting at, Joel?

Joel It's just that it doesn't look to me like things are going so well for you right now.

Mauro For me?

Joel Yeah.

Mauro Why's that?

Joel You don't seem so happy with Bianca.

Mauro But I am.

Joel Are you sure?

Mauro I'm not getting you.

Joel I think that you trust Bianca too much.

Mauro Are you trying to say you know something that I don't?

Joel I just have this feeling about it.

Celso *and* **Ana** *enter.* **Ana** *looks as if she has been crying.*

Joel Hi, Celsinho?

Celso Hi.

Joel I heard you joined the college drama club.

Celso News travels fast.

Joel Congrats.

Celso Cheers.

Joel It'll be good – help get you out of yourself a bit. (*Referring to* **Ana**.) Did something happen to your sister?

Celso She had a fight with her boyfriend.

Ana Celso!

Celso Calm down.

Ana I've told you not to go talking my business to people.

She exits.

Celso The big bust-up continues.

Mauro What did he do?

Celso Cheated on her.

Mauro Whoa.

Celso She's gutted.

Joel I can imagine just how she feels.

He paces up and down, agitated.

Mauro What's up with you?

Joel Let's meet up at my place tomorrow.

Mauro What for?

Joel I've got an idea.

Mauro What kind of idea?

Joel Something to do with all this love stuff. But I can only tell you about it tomorrow. You coming, Mauro?

Mauro When have I never been interested in your 'ideas', mate?

Joel What about you, Celsinho?

Celso Do I really need to be there?

Joel Of course you do.

Celso I don't even have a girlfriend!

Joel You don't know what I've got planned yet!

Celso All right, then, I'm in.

Joel And bring your sister, too. I think it'll be good for her.

Celso I'll try.

Joel (*to* **Mauro**) Can you ask Lia?

Mauro Lia?

Joel She'd be great for what I've got in mind. Right, then, let's get going. I've got some planning to do for our meeting.

He exits. **Mauro** *and* **Celso**, *unnerved by* **Joel**, *exit, too.*

Scene Two

Mauro'*s bedroom. He lies on the floor, looks up at the ceiling.*
Bianca *sits in a chair.*

Bianca What happened, Mauro?

Mauro Why?

Bianca You're acting strange.

Mauro It's just foolishness, Bianca.

Bianca Do you want to tell me something?

Mauro It's all right. (*Silence.*) Did you ever cheat on me?

Bianca What a question!

Mauro Answer me.

Bianca Of course not.

Mauro Are you sure?

Bianca Why are you asking me this now?

Mauro I told you it was foolishness.

Bianca Did someone say something to you?

Mauro It's just what I'm thinking, that's all.

Bianca (*leaving*) I think I'd better go.

Mauro Where are you off to?

Bianca Home.

Mauro (*holding her*) Wait.

Bianca What is it?

Mauro Stay a bit longer.

Holds her tighter. She breaks free and shoots him a look.

Are you pissed off with me?

Bianca We'll see each other tomorrow afternoon.

Mauro Tomorrow afternoon?

Bianca Yeah, what's up now?

Mauro I can't make it tomorrow.

Bianca Why not?

Mauro There's some kind of meeting at Joel's place.

Bianca What, homework stuff?

Mauro No, something else.

Bianca Haven't you all stopped with all that meeting business?

Mauro No, this time it's different.

Bianca What's different about it?

Mauro He wants to talk to us.

Bianca Who 'us'?

Mauro Our friends.

Bianca What about?

Mauro He didn't say.

Bianca And it can only be tomorrow?

Mauro That's when he called it.

Bianca It's Saturday tomorrow, Mauro!

Mauro Please, Bianca.

Bianca (*leaving*) You know what's best.

Mauro Come back here.

She exits.

Scene Three

On a road. **Lia** *is passing by.* **Mauro** *talks to her.*

Mauro Hi, Lia.

Lia Hi, Mauro. How are you?

Mauro Good. You?

Lia Fine.

Mauro Joel asked me to give you a message.

Lia Message?

Mauro He wants you to go to his place tomorrow afternoon.

Lia Me?

Mauro Not just you.

Lia What for?

Mauro He won't say. But it looks like it might be fun.

Lia Oh, that Joel.

Mauro You gonna go?

Lia I suppose so.

Silence.

Mauro And what about us?

Lia What about us?

Mauro You said you liked me one time.

Lia God, that was ages ago!

Mauro Don't you like me any more?

Lia It's not that, Mauro. It's just that my life's changed so much over the past few years.

Mauro How's that?

Lia I'm not looking for a steady thing any more.

Mauro Why?

Lia I've been hurt too much by boys. Besides, aren't you still going out with Bianca?

Mauro I am . . . But it's not going so well.

Lia Why?

Mauro I don't know.

Lia Since when did all this happen?

Mauro I don't know.

Lia You don't know anything about it?

Mauro That's about right.

Lia (*exiting*) When you've really finished with her, we might talk, yeah?

Mauro Really?

Lia I've gotta go now.

Mauro OK.

Lia See you tomorrow – at Joel's place.

Mauro See you tomorrow, Lia.

Lia *continues on her way.* **Mauro** *exits the opposite way.*

Scene Four

In **Joel***'s garage.* **Joel**, **Mauro**, **Celso**, **Ana** *and* **Lia** *are all there. Some are seated in chairs while others stand or sit on the floor.*

Joel OK then, well, you must all be wondering why I called you over here. I've come to realise that you are all walking around feeling bad because of this thing we all know as 'love'. I don't think it should be like this. Having analysed what it really means to be human, I can now see that the best thing is to never get involved with anyone in the first place. Go out with them for a bit and then drop them pronto. I want to think about this stuff and I want us to have somewhere we can all meet up and tell each other our own stories which will help lift our spirits. Our stories – things that no one else knows. If we can all recognise that feeling bad is kind of inevitable, then from now on we can make sure that it's us who make others end up feeling that way. We don't need to feel bad again, get it? So, Mauro, what do you think about it?

Mauro Interesting.

Joel Can I count you in?

Mauro Course you can.

Joel What about you, Celsinho?

Ana I can't stand it!

Celso I won't let that happen any more.

Joel You need to stop being such a coward and start seducing this girl!

Celso I think she's getting pissed off with me.

Joel That's just a phase.

Celso Maybe.

Joel Ask her out to the pictures.

Celso I don't know how to do that.

Mauro We can help you.

Joel No one's going to help anyone!

Mauro Calm down, Joel!

Joel Don't ask me to be calm at a time like this! It's this guy's maturity that's at stake here. Do you want to be a man or not, Celsinho?

Celso Of course I do.

Joel So start doing what I tell you to do or you'll end up like your sister!

Celso *starts to sob but composes himself for fear of being told off.*

Joel And you, too, Mauro. Be careful with what you're doing.

Mauro What d'you mean?

Joel Dumping Bianca, bedding three girls and then trying to climb on top of Lia. And after Lia? Didn't I make it clear that no one in this group should get involved with anyone else, let alone someone from within the group itself?

Mauro Yeah, you did.

Joel Well, at least you admit it. (*Silence.*) Now, saving the best till last, let's have Lia.

Lia That's a big responsibility.

Joel You're the only one who's up to it.

Lia Well, it feels like I've passed some kind of test this week.

Joel Test?

Lia I think I came out of it OK.

Joel Go on.

Lia Well, imagine the love of your life.

Joel OK . . .

Lia Now imagine this guy blanking you completely.

Joel OK . . .

Lia And imagine that it's almost sending you round the bend.

Joel What an imagination she has!

Lia Well, that same guy found me the other day and started telling me that I was the love of his life.

Joel This happens a lot.

Lia Maybe, but my reaction to it doesn't.

Joel What did you do?

Lia I told him that I had changed and I wasn't the same any more. That I couldn't be the way I was before not for anything in the world. He didn't believe me but I did myself proud nevertheless.

Joel We are all proud of you, Lia. What would we all be without your stories? And what would I be? I can see I've still got a lot to learn. I wish I had your strength, Lia, but I just haven't.

Lia You will.

As on the previous occasions, **Joel** *turns to face the centre of the garage and reaches out his arms suggesting to the others that they follow suit.*

Joel By the force of our spirits!

All By the force of our spirits!

They all exit except for **Joel**, *who wanders around looking perturbed. Suddenly* **Ana** *enters.*

Joel What are you doing here?

Ana What's wrong?

Joel You're dead.

Ana I'm more alive than you.

Joel I hate your cowardice.

Ana Cowardice? Don't you think that I needed to have courage to do what I did?

Joel Killing yourself to get someone to take some notice of you?

Ana Maybe I was wrong to do it, but I couldn't help the love I felt.

Joel If you hadn't left the ritual, this would never have happened.

Ana The ritual's got nothing to do with it – not for you or anyone else. Why are you so ashamed of facing up to your problems?

Joel I don't have any problems.

Ana Your problem is thinking you don't have any. Leave those kids alone. Leave my brother out of it. He's about to lose it.

She disappears.

Scene Sixteen

Bianca'*s bedroom. She seems distressed. Her mobile rings.* **Márcia** *is calling her from her place.*

Bianca Hello?

Márcia Hi!

Bianca Who is it?

Márcia Márcia!

Bianca Hi, Márcia.

Márcia Did you speak to Mauro?

Bianca I got nowhere.

Márcia Talk to him again.

Bianca What's the point?

Márcia To stop a tragedy happening.

Bianca What tragedy?

Márcia I've heard that Joel's gone and bought himself a gun. And a load of ammunition to go with it.

Bianca Who told you that?

Márcia His cousin.

Bianca Oh my God . . .

Márcia Something bad could happen any time. I'm going to another city and my cousin's going to go to the police.

Bianca Police?

Márcia Yeah.

Bianca I can't believe it.

Márcia Joel is going to do something really bad. And he's going to take you all down with him.

Bianca I'm going to call Mauro.

Márcia Do it. And be careful.

They ring off. **Márcia** *exits the scene.* **Bianca** *calls* **Mauro,** *who answers on his mobile.*

Mauro Hello?

Bianca Mauro?

Mauro Hi.

Bianca Mauro, you've got to listen to me. Márcia just called me and told me that Joel's bought a gun. He's getting ready to do something really bad. It might involve you guys! Please, warn everyone. I'm going to warn the college principal.

Mauro Don't do that.

Bianca Joel's cousin has gone to the police.

Mauro What's it got to do with the police?

Bianca What do you mean?

Mauro Márcia really hates him, doesn't she?

Bianca It was his cousin who told her about the gun!

Mauro I know this cousin.

Bianca And what's knowing him got to do with it?

Mauro He's a gangster.

Bianca That's worse! (*Silence.*) Mauro, do you have no feelings left for me at all?

Mauro What a question.

Bianca If you do, then do something.

Mauro Let me have a think about it.

Bianca There's no time to mull this over!

Mauro You're driving me round the bend!

He rings off and exits the scene.

Scene Seventeen

Joel's *bedroom. He takes out his mobile and dials a number. As no one answers, he leaves a message.*

Joel Hello, Márcia? Still not taking my calls, eh? Well, listen to this one last thing. You don't need to call me back. I won't be waiting. I've been done over by loads of people. But no one went as far as you. So, I'm going to do something that will make you never forget me. It's for you to learn not to do that to anyone else.

He rings off.

Scene Eighteen

Joel's *garage. The same layout as before but this time there are no chairs.* **Mauro, Celso** *and* **Lia** *stand while* **Joel** *watches them from a platform.*

Joel (*to* **Celso**) You go first today, Celso.

Celso Me?

Joel We're all curious to hear how your story's going.

Celso First off, I want to apologise to you all about the other meetings.

Joel You don't need to do that.

Celso It was shameful.

Joel Get on with it, Celsinho!

Silence.

Celso I killed someone.

Lia You *what*?

Joel How?

Mauro You killed someone?

Celso Yeah.

Joel Who?

Celso The girl who was making me feel so low about myself.

Lia Oh my God . . .

Joel But you said that she'd stopped making you feel like that!

Celso Well, she started again more than ever!

Joel Wasn't this the girl you were in love with?

Celso That's the one.

Joel I asked you to seduce her and you go and kill her?!

Celso Did I do wrong?

Joel And you're still asking me if you did wrong? You did very wrong! Is this really true? Did you really kill someone or are you trying to impress us?

Celso I did kill someone.

Joel Who do you think you are, taking someone's life away from them? What value do you place on life when you can go and just kill someone like that? What have you really suffered to make you go and do a thing like that?

Lia Can I say what I feel about this?

Joel This is serious, Lia!

Lia But can I say something? When he said he'd killed someone, it made me . . . I can't explain it. It made me feel like I could kill someone, too!

Joel No, Lia, no!

Lia Why not?

Joel You can't do that.

Lia But I'd do it a different way. Not with a gun, but with an orgy where people could die from pleasure!

Joel Shut up, Lia!

Mauro Shut up, Joel!

Joel What?

Mauro I told you to shut up!

Joel Have you totally lost it?

Mauro You've gone too far this time.

Joel What did I do?

Mauro You're screwing us all up. And we didn't come here for that. We came here to have our spirits lifted! Wasn't that what you told us? Instead you've made us all mad, sick and weak! Look what's happening here now! What do you really want from us?

Joel Do you really want to know?

He takes out a gun from under the platform. They all scream and go to run for cover. **Joel** *points the gun towards them all.*

Stay right there!

They all freeze.

Mauro So it's true, then.

Joel What is?

Mauro Stop all this. At this rate, the police'll be on their way.

Joel Who else knows about this?

Mauro Someone must do.

Joel No one knows a thing. You idiots! Bunch of tossers! (*To* **Ana**, *who has just appeared.*) Like that girl there!

Lia Who are you talking to?

Joel Celso's sister.

Celso Liar.

Joel You all calling this a 'ritual' – ritual of what?! Ritual for who? It's for me, that's who. The ritual of my life. The shitty little life that I'm still living! I'm tired of this world where everyone's out for themselves. People who think they're king of the whole universe. Well, now they're gonna see who's king. With an ending comes a rebirth! That's what I've always believed. I'm gonna show you what it really means to have a strong spirit!

Scene Nineteen

A square. **Mauro** *sits waiting.* **Bianca** *enters.*

Mauro Sit down, Bianca.

Bianca *sits down.*

Mauro Thanks for seeing me. (*Silence.*) You're still mad at me, aren't you?

Bianca What do you think?

Mauro Can you ever forgive me?

Bianca Forgive you for what?

Mauro For being so pig-headed.

Bianca I'll try. (*Silence.*) I can forgive you for being so stubborn, for putting so many people's lives at risk, including your own. But what I can't change is what I feel for you.

Mauro And what do you feel for me?

Bianca Nothing.

Mauro Meaning . . . ?

Bianca You threw everything away.

Mauro I know.

Bianca All for this friend of yours.

Mauro It wasn't because of him.

Bianca What was it for, then?

Mauro My ignorance.

Bianca You were pretty stupid, then.

Mauro I was weak.

Bianca That too.

Mauro Couldn't you give me another chance?

Bianca I don't know.

Mauro (*taking the bracelet off his wrist*) In case you want proof that I really mean it . . .

He throws the bracelet away.

Bianca It's easy to do that now.

She makes to leave.

Mauro Where are you off to?

Bianca Home.

Mauro Can I call you one of these days?

Bianca Leave me alone, Mauro.

Mauro Sure.

Bianca I need to think about what's happened here.

She exits.

The Ritual

Notes on rehearsal and staging, drawn from a workshop with the writer and translator held at the National Theatre, November 2011

Thoughts from the Writer

The Ritual is a play about a group of young people who are totally disconnected from their parents and the world around them. They live without involvement from the adults in their lives and have no real sense of family. Although they don't discuss this openly at any point, they carry it through the play. In a way, *The Ritual* is about a breakdown of family values and the consequences of this breakdown.

When Samir arrived in the UK the first thing he asked was whether it was safe here. In São Paulo it is not safe to walk alone at night. Fear of crime and its impact run through everyday life, and it should underscore the play. It is not uncommon in Brazil for women to be murdered by their partners or ex-partners. *The Ritual* is in some ways a comment on this. Bianca is caught in the crossfire of Joel's anger, but Márcia is the catalyst for it, and therefore for the action of the play.

Locating the Play

The play was initially written about Brazil, and it strongly portrays life there, but neither Samir nor Orla O'Loughlin, who was leading the workshop, suggests that it need be the setting. Mark O'Thomas suggests that, as the translation is not 'localised', the absence of specificity allows a certain amount of freedom in terms of setting. The most important thing is that the logic of the world holds up. You might decide to set your production in any city or town, but there is a sense of 'otherness' in the characters, action and events which it is important to retain.

There are several things to note here:

- The characters must be somewhere where the murder Celso commits is in some ways unremarkable.

- In this world, middle-class young people can easily get hold of guns.
- Death is common in this world and it is also fetishised by young people.
- In this world the supernatural is natural. It is part of the fabric of everyday life, and therefore Joel is not surprised to see Ana's ghost.

It is crucial that wherever you choose to set the play, your chosen world can accommodate these points – if the events cannot be part of the fabric of this world then the action will not make sense.

Ways to Begin Work on the Play

CREATE A STRONG UNIT

Orla suggested that the 'group' or 'family' feeling of those taking part in the ritual is key. Try to find your own ways of making your acting company a strong, unified community. Experiment with different songs, games or exercises until you find something that feels right for your group. It should be something that helps create a bond between them. Things that can be repeated at the start of each rehearsal (almost your own company 'ritual') will probably be most helpful.

GETTING IT UP ON ITS FEET

Once you are ready to stand up and think about putting the play on its feet, Orla suggested a more active read-through. Line the actors' chairs up against the back wall. Start at the beginning of the play, with the characters in each scene entering, walking forward and standing in a line. All lines of text should be delivered straight out, and at the end of each scene everyone should exit, walk back to their seat and then re-enter if they are in the next scene.

This simple exercise can help you to unlock important information and enable exploration of each character's journey through the play. Mauro, for example, is in each of

the first four scenes of the play, making him pivotal. This could indicate that *The Ritual* is, in fact, Mauro's story, in which case, this may have an effect on your choices of staging further down the line. Perhaps you might think about keeping Mauro onstage with the action moving around him.

HAPPINESS AND NORMALITY

There is a great deal of darkness in *The Ritual*, but Orla suggested that it is important to pick out the lighter moments, too. Try to identify what is normality and what is extremity in this world. There is a danger of playing the end at the beginning and you should work hard to avoid this. Samir suggests that the ritual itself begins as something fairly normal and escalates to an extreme. It is a joke that becomes serious.

The Characters

All the young people in the play are unused to having a voice. This is revealed by their surprise at their own power as they take control of, and end, relationships.

JOEL His relationships with women are confused and complex. He is intelligent and has the power to lead, but he uses this power to negative effect.

The phone calls give an important insight into Joel's character and situation – they demonstrate that he feels a great need to maintain contact with people who do not want to speak to him – he must be in control. He has a strong violent streak and is angry when Celso steals his thunder by taking someone's life. Like a double-edged sword, Joel portrays himself as moral but is actually deeply violent. He is also extremely vulnerable, which is what drives him to seek power in the first place.

ANA Ana is the only character who really resists Joel. Her return to torment him is a progression of this resistance and an important continuation of Ana's through-line. Ana wants to be loved, but her experience with relationships, her own

parents and the ritual itself all undermine her hope. She is driven by a desire for revenge.

LIA Lia names the ritual, and she also creates the dance. She has a certain power, which comes from her overt sexuality. How aware she is of this power is a decision for each director and performer to make. Her dance is described as 'exotic', and this is not a cultural reference to South America but refers instead to Lia. The dance is character-driven and an expression of Lia herself. Lia is in love with Mauro.

BIANCA Bianca has not cheated on Mauro. She, like Ana, can see through Joel and understand the destructive drive behind his actions.

MAURO There is a fragility to Mauro that allows Joel to manipulate him. He has been with Bianca for a long time, and during the ritual he begins to think that he has never lived. He feels he's missing out on the excitement of single life and it is this, combined with Joel's lie about Bianca, that leads him to end their relationship.

CELSO It is very important that there is a clear age difference between Celso and the rest of the group. He is much younger than them, and he is always running after girls who don't like him.

MÁRCIA Márcia is not only the catalyst, but also the character through whom we see the truth. It is only when Bianca meets Márcia in Scene Eleven that the audience discovers how unhinged Joel is.

All the characters who take part in *The Ritual* follow a similar trajectory, with Joel being the most extreme. Samir suggests that it might be helpful to look at characters' counterparts, or 'echoes'. For example, Joel and Lia have definite similarities, as do Celso and Ana. However, less obvious but very important are Ana and Joel, who are both out for revenge in different ways.

Each character is filled with contradictions. For example, Ana could seem weak, but her dramatic act also takes strength. Orla suggests that the characters are almost musical in the way they go up and down. The silences within their arcs are particularly important, as they offer clues to each character's uncertainty. None of these people feels secure – they are uncertain of their place in the world from moment to moment.

It is useful to see how much information the text holds about each character's family background. All the adults seem to be either dangerous or broken – there is a hint that Joel's father was violent, and Celso's mother can't be left alone. This leaves our characters adrift in a world with no fixed points of security and safety. It is of their own making, and has no external boundaries, so they are making up the rules as they go along, and their worlds are filled with contradictions. Carefully consider how each character expresses the extent of their power, damage and vulnerability.

Suggested Exercises for Use in Rehearsals

IMPROVISATION

Orla recommends doing some work 'off the text' to help establish what is normal to these characters. Try exploring some of the following ideas through improvisation:

Bianca and Mauro's relationship What was it like before Joel told Mauro that Bianca was cheating? (Although we never see them in this state, we need glimpses of it in order to understand what they stand to lose.)

The group's social life What did they do before 'the ritual'?

Celso's love life How does he try to approach the women he likes? And how does this lead to the murder?

Bianca and Joel They never meet in the play, but their relationship is extremely important. Try exploring some scenarios in their recent past in which they meet.

INTERROGATING THE TEXT

There are several key moments in the text where it might be particularly beneficial to question a character's intention or motivation. One example is Joel's introductory speech in Scene Four. When the group gathers in Joel's garage, has Joel pre-planned his speech? How much has he considered what he will say? It might be useful to try two different versions of the speech – one in which he has pre-planned everything, and one in which it's more spur of the moment. How do these two different intentions affect the action? How does Joel come across and what implications does this have for his journey and the shape of the play?

CONNECT OR RETREAT

There are several duologues in the play, and this is a good exercise to try on all of them. Two performers stand several metres apart. They should read their scene from beginning to end, and on each line they can either step towards the other character, or away from them, or remain where they are, depending on whether they are trying to connect with the other person, or retreat from them or maintain their position.

Production Notes

In many ways *The Ritual* is a director's play, as there are so many important choices to be made when staging it. There are many subtle ambiguities in the play, and Samir is happy for each production to tackle these in their own way. You may decide that the ambiguity is important, or you may alternatively decide to make firm decisions about characters' intentions and actions. But be clear what the 'givens' are, as they will give you a secure place from which to interpret and make choices.

Consider carefully what the audience relationship to the action will be. The play comprises many short scenes – do you want the audience to view these end-on, or in traverse, or perhaps in promenade?

One way of exploring this might be to take a more complex scene, such as the first ritual, and experiment with different perspectives. How does it affect the action if we can see Joel's face but the rest of the group have their backs to the audience? What happens if you reverse this, or have them all at an angle? What do you gain or lose from each of these options?

Equally important to the audience relationship with the action is the characters' physical relationship to one another. How close are they, physically? It is particularly interesting to explore Scene Five. Ana and Celso are sitting in Ana's room together, which already indicates a closeness as siblings. Within this, play with how close or distant they are. What does the scene feel like if they are on opposite sides of the room? Or with Ana on the bed and Celso on the floor? Or sitting next to each other on the bed? Do they maintain eye contact, or does one or other of them look away? Take the time to play and explore each possibility and its implications.

PHONE CALLS

Joel has a conversation on the phone with an unknown character, from whom he is buying a gun. Decide what is being said on the other end of the phone and stick to it.

The phone calls could be staged in many different ways. It is also possible to explore different means of communication, such as Skype, iChat, email and Facebook. Conversations on the phone could be staged with one performer present and the other recorded, or with one character in the foreground and one in the background. Each of these different options has an impact on whose story you are telling, so explore all the possibilities.

REACTING TO THE CRISIS POINTS

Each character reacts differently to the news of Ana's death and later the murder Celso commits, and it is important to make sense of these differing and sometimes surprising reactions. In Scene Twelve, there is an element of shock –

none of them is prepared for this first death. It makes them think that anything is possible. The temperature of the play changes completely, and new, dangerous possibilities open up. Their reactions are also shaped by the fact that they are in a very public place. Mauro makes what seems like a totally inappropriate advance on Lia, but it's possible that he genuinely thinks that he has nothing to lose and his time may be limited.

THE END

In the penultimate scene, we see Joel waving a loaded gun at the other group members. The scene ends, and in the next scene, we see Mauro and Bianca discussing their relationship. At no point do we find out for certain how the gun standoff in the final ritual was resolved. Samir has no firm answers, but would instead prefer that each group makes its own decision as to how the ritual ended. You may choose to hint at this outcome in the transition between the penultimate and the final scenes, or you may like to leave the audience to make up their own minds.

From a workshop led by Orla O'Loughlin,
with notes by Kirsty Housley