

Tempo

by

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**A Creative Thesis
Presented to
The University of Guelph**

**In partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Theatre Studies**

Guelph, Ontario, Canada

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ABSTRACT

TEMPO

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Advisor: Judith Thompson
Second Reader: Ann Wilson

When Amy comes to work at the Festival on the Grand, she enters a world in which feminism has disappeared. Without a way to access feminism, the Festival staff: Judith, Poppy, James, Lisa, and Amy endure the patriarchal rule of Artistic Director, Nick Noble. *Tempo* captures the Festival in the week leading up to its prestigious 40th anniversary opening night: the Berlioz Requiem and concludes by asking the audience to consider our current treatment of feminism. The afterword that accompanies the script is part personal reflection, part critical analysis. The reflection includes the process of developing, writing, and workshopping the script as well as how the play conveys feminism in form, content, and inspiration. The analysis considers the notion of post-feminism and the dangers of blindly embracing it. This project aims to encourage an audience to be critical of post-feminism and revive feminism in creative and useful ways.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Judith Thompson for her generous dramaturgical support of *Tempo* as well as her enthusiasm for the script in all its versions; Ann Wilson for her constant academic support and ridding me of self-doubt; The workshop cast of *Tempo*: Jane Marie Watson, John Watson, Krysti Allison, Emma Barr, David Newman, and Abigail Slinger for bringing the play to life; Emily van Dop for being my sounding board and, as always, my parents, Adrian and Susan, for believing in everything I do.

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CHARACTERS

JUDITH (50) The General Manager of the Festival on the Grand. At 50, Judith is in her prime. Her experience in the world has accumulated and she looks to the Festival as her latest project, one that will benefit from the lessons she has learnt in her life.

NICK (60) Stuck in his ways, Nick is the founder and Artistic Director of the Festival on the Grand. His confidence is bolstered by musical genius, which has begun to dwindle. His Festival has outgrown him but he continues to treat it like his own personal kingdom.

AMY (19) Young and ambitious, Amy is the new summer student at the Festival. Eager to enter the working world, Amy is unaware of the darker side of the organization.

LISA (39) Lisa, the Marketing Manager, is suffocating in debt and is chipping away at it by working at the Festival. She is consumed by self-doubt and believes that her position is cursed.

JAMES (55) A recovering alcoholic fresh from rehab, James is scraping by in life. Unable to deal with the stress of work, he has been stripped of his music career and is doing the bookkeeping for the Festival, the only place that will take him in.

POPPY (65) Poppy, the Volunteer Coordinator is the Festival's history. Not only does she know all 280 volunteers by name, she also knows everything to know about the Festival. However, as she gets older, her value is diminishing in a male-dominated world.

SETTING

The Festival on the Grand Office. Summer.

TIME

The week leading up to The Festival's prestigious opening night: the Berlioz Requiem.

ACT 1
Scene 1

(The lights come up on the disheveled office space of the Festival on the Grand. The old, purple carpet is worn down to its backing, particularly in the high traffic areas. The roof droops slightly and the windows need to be replaced. The office walls are laden with posters from festivals past. The telephone rings and rings into the empty office. Judith enters the office and gets it ready: lights on, coffee pot on, OPEN sign flipped. She straightens one of the Festival posters, which had become askew in the night. Amy enters hesitantly. Judith emerges from her office.)

JUDITH

Amy, you're right on time. Come have a seat in my office.

AMY

Thank you Ms-

JUDITH

Judith. Please call me Judith.

AMY

Judith. Thank you for seeing me.

JUDITH

Are you kidding? Thank you for coming in on such short notice! Let's get on with it, shall we?

AMY

Sure. Here's a copy of my résumé.

JUDITH

(Beat)

This looks great. Do you have a car?

AMY

Well, I don't have one. But my parents are both teachers so I have access to one in the summer.

JUDITH

Excellent, and you're interested in the arts? Classical music in particular?

AMY

Oh, yes.

JUDITH

Great!

(reading off the grant form)

And do you feel that this job relates to what you're pursuing in university?

AMY

Yes, very much so.

JUDITH

Excellent, I can get a government grant for your salary, unless the Conservatives unsheathe their arts hatchet again. Now, I'll just warn you that this job is going to be busy. The Festival runs for a month starting on Friday. I promise it will be longest month of your life.

AMY

Oh, I don't mind that...

JUDITH

Good. Now, you're not going to have a lot of time to get comfortable. Normally you'd have a couple months to get used to everything but, Lindsay decided to flit off to Europe couple days ago. So, I'm afraid, it'll be trial by fire.

AMY

I'm a quick learner.

JUDITH

Excellent. I think we'll get along well. Now you'll be in charge of day-to-day box office duties, as well as...

(Nick enters in a fury)

NICK

Judith! Judith!

JUDITH

Nick, I'm in the middle of a job interv--

NICK

(throwing the season brochure on her desk, completely ignoring Amy)

Who the hell is Katrina Pierce Grossman?

JUDITH

(sarcastically)

It's nice to see you too, Nick. How was your trip?

NICK

You can save the pleasantries!

JUDITH

Okay, then. As you can see from the calendar, she is the guest conductor for opening night.

NICK

We never have a guest conductor for anything, especially not opening night!

JUDITH

Don't you think we should start off the 40th anniversary season with a splash?

NICK

It's the Berlioz! I'm known for the Berlioz! That is my best opening, Judy!

JUDITH

(correcting him)

Don't call me Judy. Well, sorry Nick but when you spend six months in South America right before we open, people are left to make decisions for you.

NICK

Artistic decisions are best left to me under all circumstances!

JUDITH

Look, can we please talk about this later? As you can see, I am in the middle of--

NICK

Cancel this guest conductor.

JUDITH

When was the last time you went to an orchestral concert that was conducted by a woman?
Amy, when was the last time you saw a woman conduct an orchestra?

AMY

I've never seen a woman conduct an orchestra.

JUDITH

See? This Festival needs to be ushered into the 21st century!

NICK

Not by the baton of Kimberly... Prince... whatever! The Festival needs to stick to its roots!

JUDITH

The patrons who appreciate your consistency are starting to die off, Nick! Since you left for your little trip, there are seven more patrons marked 'deceased' on Venue Manager!

NICK

You've already scheduled that ridiculous drumming band for the third weekend. Let the young people go to that! I don't see why you need to meddle with the opening!

JUDITH

The Board approved Katrina so, take it up with them.

NICK

It looks like I'll have to!

JUDITH

(Consulting her master schedule)

Shouldn't you be at the Studio in rehearsal? You still have twenty-three concerts to conduct...

NICK

Which should be twenty-four!

(he notices his surroundings)

What's different in here? What have you done?

JUDITH

I painted the office a respectable colour. That multi-coloured atrocity needed to go.

NICK

It looks like shit. Newborn baby shit.

JUDITH

Meconium. It's called meconium.

NICK

I don't care what the colour is called. It looks like shit!

JUDITH

Taupe is a proper office colour.

NICK

Any other surprises I should know about?

JUDITH

Only that opening night is sold out.

NICK

(frustrated)

I'll be at the Studio. Get rid of this Katherine... Percy... conductor woman.

(pointedly)

Judith...

(Nick exits)

JUDITH

(not fazed)

Your desk is over there, Amy. Why don't you get acquainted with Venue Manager before the phones start ringing?

(Amy moves toward her desk and pulls out her chair. She jumps back.)

AMY

A mouse! I just saw a mouse!

JUDITH

Relax! Relax! We do get the odd sighting. Unfortunately, we can't afford a new office until we've paid up for some very expensive past seasons.

(Amy sits down, checking her surroundings. Judith takes a breath.)

Welcome to the team! You know, you're joining a legacy here. The Festival on the Grand is an economic and cultural staple in Gambrel.

AMY

For a local, I have a disappointing amount of experience with the Festival. I have heard a lot about it though.

JUDITH

Most likely petty drama, is that right? All Gambrel's gossip seems to originate here. It's so unprofessional.

(Pause)

Look, you have an important role here, Amy. Back when the Festival first started, the only paid position was a summer student. So, you're part of a long lineage of girls who have had this job. I want you to feel like an equal part of the team, okay? Make the job yours.

AMY

I don't have a lot of experience—

JUDITH

You'll gain experience.

(the phone rings)

See?

AMY

Hello?

(Pause)

Oh, no, this is The Festival on the Grand. No, we certainly don't operate the zip line over the river. We're a Classical Music Fest—

(she takes the receiver from her ear)

They hung up...

JUDITH

That's where all the youth are today. Careening off cliffs for \$100 buck a pop instead of getting some culture. You handled that well. Try "Good Morning, The Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking." Very professional, don't you think?

AMY

I'll keep practicing.

JUDITH

If Nick calls, tell him I'm in a conference call or something.

AMY

Is he usually like that?

JUDITH

Ha! Yes, his highness Nick Noble is usually like that. Artistic Directors on the whole are...dramatic individuals. Neurologically speaking, there must be something that happens to your brain when you're a musical genius that brings out the worst in you. I'm sorry I didn't properly introduce you. He wouldn't have remembered your name anyway. He calls everyone 'love'. 'Get me a coffee, won't you, love?' 'Love' means he has no idea what your name is.

AMY

He knows your name.

JUDITH

That's because I taught it to him. Nick, you see, has been...enabled his whole life so he gets, well, very melodramatic when he's told what to do. But, he's no concern of yours. He's rarely in the office anyway. Coffee?

AMY

I'm not much of a coffee drinker.

JUDITH

I only smoke in the summer months because of this Festival, so, maybe you'll take up some sort of vice too. Caffeine is a good place to start.

(The phone rings. Amy goes to pick it up)

AMY

Good morning the Festival on the Grand...

(she realizes it was Judith's cell that was ringing. Judith picks up her phone)

JUDITH

Mary-Beth, thank you for returning my call. Now, I know Nick 's behaviour at the Gala was completely inappropriate, but if you could please consider donating again...Yes, the Trillium came through but it's still not enough...

(Cigarette poised, Judith goes to exit. Lisa enters the office looking disheveled. She's carrying a stack of newspapers. She doesn't notice Amy. The office phone rings and Amy picks it up.)

ACT 1

Scene 2

AMY

Good Morning, the Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking.

(Lisa addresses the audience without being noticed by Amy. Amy fumbles through her ticket orders)

LISA

(Noticing that Amy picked up the phone)

You know, I've always wanted to know how many tickets I sold when I was a summer student. In those days, it was just me. The Festival didn't have enough money to hire anyone else. They didn't even have an office. Well, not that you can call this dump an office. But, it's better than the small room in the Arts Centre that I was locked in for four summers! Just me, a ticket printer and that phone.

(the phone rings again. Amy answers it)

Sometimes, when I'm falling asleep, I think I hear that ring and I jerk awake because I think I have to sell another ticket. By my third Festival, I discovered that, if I listened really closely, I could hear my name in the ring.

(the phone rings again. Amy juggles two calls)

Did you hear it? Freaky eh? Some days I would have given anything to be a waitress so, at least, I could see other people. Sure, I was talking all day to people who called in but I never actually saw anyone. It was stifling. When Nick started to come and visit me during my last summer, I was elated! He'd come in to get me to book comps for all his connections and we'd start talking. To be honest, I was trying to build up the courage to show him some songs that I'd been working on. I mean, who better than Nick Noble to look at my music?!

(the phone rings two or three overlapping times)

But, you know, it was so hard to carry on a conversation with that damn phone ringing all the time that we started screwing around instead. Yes, he was older than me, way older, but I thought he liked me. He'd call me "love". I dunno, I thought it was cute. But, every time I'd try and play my songs for him I'd just get, "later, love, later."

(Beat)

Turns out he wasn't the only one who didn't want to listen to it. Twenty years in Toronto and not one bite. I promised myself that if I caved and moved back, that I'd never work for the Festival again. Funny thing about my life though is that it never works out like I plan.

(Beat)

Nick didn't remember me. I thought I might have left a good impression on someone in Gambrel. But, no. It was all 'nice-to-meet-yous' all over again. But, at least the phone still knows my name. Best colleague I've ever had. How sad is that?

(The phone rings. Blackout.)

ACT 1
Scene 3

(James, Lisa, Poppy, Judith, and now Amy, are at their desks. Amy juggles three lines of phone calls. Judith emerges from her office.)

JUDITH

(she announces)

Staff Meeting in five everyone.

AMY

(on the phone)

Yes, Mrs. Lewis. There should be three digits on your card by your signature. Yes, I'm sure they're there. If you turn your card over you'll be able to see them. Can you hold a moment, please?

(She holds and answers another call)

Good Morning, the Festival on the Grand. Amy speaking. I'm very sorry but opening night is sold out. I'd be happy to put you on the waiting list. Can you hold, please? Hi Mrs. Lewis, 7...6...9 okay, great. Your tickets will be at the Box office at the Main Stage...

(Amy continues her calls)

LISA

Poppy, what do you think of this ad? The Chronicle wants it by the end of the day.

(Before Poppy can get a good look, James butts in)

JAMES

(casually)

It's too dark

LISA

Green is TOO DARK? Poppy, could you weigh in here? Please!

POPPY

It looks fine to me but, James does have a better eye for this stuff.

LISA

(to herself)

But I didn't ask him.

JAMES

(to Lisa)

By the way, I have to see your marketing numbers by the end of the day. Well, I needed to see them two weeks ago but now...

LISA

Will you just give me a minute? I have to get this ad sent in?

JAMES

Are you going to send it like that?

LISA

Fine, fine, fine. I'll make it LESS dark.

JUDITH

Two minutes everyone.

(She sees Poppy folding a bunch of papers)

Poppy, what's all this?

POPPY

Nick changed the program for the Bach concert again. I've had to reprint all the inserts.

JUDITH

Jesus. I thought he took out the Mass in B minor.

POPPY

He did. But now he's put it back in.

JUDITH

I just put away those scores. I'll go dig them out.

(She exits into the music library)

LISA

(to Poppy)

What do you think of it now?

POPPY

(considers the ad)

I think it's lovely, hunny.

LISA

Do you like the graphic? I wasn't sure to how capture the bleakness of Glick in a picture.

JAMES

It's still a bit dark...

LISA

Excellent, so is Glick!

JUDITH

Okay, everyone. Meeting time. Now, I'd first like to introduce everyone to Amy-

(She notices that James is still typing)

James?

JAMES

(hesitantly)

I was just gonna...

JUDITH

(interrupting him)

We all have work to get to, this will be short. Okay, I'd like to welcome Amy to the team. Amy's made amazing progress since yesterday. Amy, why don't you introduce yourself in more detail?

AMY

Oh, sure. Well, I just finished my first year at The University of Toronto in English. I'm from Gambrel, I love the arts and I'm really excited to be here.

JUDITH

Excellent. We're happy to have you. Amy is not a coffee gopher or a lunch coordinator, people. Let's treat her like a seasoned staff person. Okay, why don't we go around? Poppy, take us away.

POPPY

Alright, well, I have all the volunteers confirmed for the month. I still need to find one billet in the village who can take one of the Austrian singers. She's allergic to cats and dogs so it's been a bit more difficult. Marty's offered to take her but with the river flooded, he's put that offer on hold until his basement isn't a small pond. Kimmy, who rents out the inner tubes at the Gorge offered to take her but she lives all the way out by the new gravel pit so, I'm in a bit of a bind. Does anyone feel like hosting an Austrian?

(Silence)

Me neither. Worse comes to worse, we'll put her up in the motel on 28...

JUDITH

I hope we don't have to resort to that.

LISA

I wouldn't put my worst enemy up there. CBC did an expose on bed bugs in the winter and busted that place.

JUDITH

Regardless, we can't afford to start putting up Austrians in motels. Pop, did you get the email I forwarded from that woman who wanted to usher?

POPPY

All the rostering is done; we're full. 280 volunteers...we're definitely full.

LISA

She probably just heard around town that it's an easy way to see a free concert anyway.

JAMES

But how old is she? It would be nice to have some younger people volunteering over the summer. Most of the ushers need to be shown where to seat the patron. Last summer I saw a patron lead an usher to the correct seat!

POPPY

James, I've gone over that already with the staff. A few of our volunteers have dementia but their spouses have asked me to keep them on for as long as I can. For many people the Festival is--

JAMES

I know, I know...the highlight of their year. I know.

POPPY

We just need to be patient with them.

JUDITH

I agree. Thank you, Poppy.

JUDITH

Lisa?

LISA

James and I are meeting soon to go over the marketing budget. I just sent in the last ad paid with sponsorship. I featured the Glick concert because it's not selling. Oh, and Kimmy wants to place an ad in the House Programme, something about a discount tube ride for Festival concert goers.

POPPY

I can't see many of our patrons going down the rapids in an inner tube. Can you imagine?

JAMES

Yeah, but it's an extra \$750 in ad revenue...

JUDITH

You make the call, Lisa. It's not the best fit but, we could use the cash. Anything else?

LISA

Oh, I'm going out this afternoon to find some stuff for the courtyard at the Main.

JAMES

Courtyard?

JUDITH

Yes, Lisa wants to put together a more welcoming entrance at the Main. I told her she could.

JAMES

(to Lisa)

A courtyard? Will this get in the way of your marketing numbers?

LISA

I'll get them to you, James.

(Pause)

JUDITH

Can we please press on you two?

JAMES

Well, don't you think it's a good idea to have someone go with her to offer a second opinion?
The Main is--

JUDITH

I'd like you to stay here this afternoon, James. We should meet about the projected sales for the season.

JAMES

But, I'll show her--

JUDITH

I'm sure Lisa can handle it. If you could just give us the numbers, please.

JAMES

(reluctantly)

Well, we're about 25,000 below where we were this time last year. But, you know, in a recession, the arts are the first to go. That being said, opening is sold out. Cash flow could be better. I almost had to "lose" the Internet bill again but the Trillium is keeping us afloat.

JUDITH

I heard back from Mary-Beth yesterday and MoirTech's sponsorship will be in by the end of the week.

JAMES

I didn't think that was an option given the incident--

JUDITH

The last thing we need this month is to not be able to pay our artists...

LISA

...or the staff...

(James shoots Lisa a glare)

JUDITH

Yes, thank you Lisa, or the staff. So, I spoke with Mary-Beth, apologized to her again and she's given us one more chance. I'll bet anything it's our last. Okay, team, let's leave it at that. Full steam ahead.

(to James)

Oh, there are about 12 boxes of old sales documents I need you to sort. I've left them in the back. I smell an audit coming.

JAMES

(getting up, frustrated)

I need a smoke.

(He exits)

LISA

Judith, I'm going to go get some of the stuff for the courtyard.

(Lisa exits. The phone rings)

AMY

Good Morning the--yes, one moment.

(She holds)

Judith, it's Nick. He sounds upset.

JUDITH

What line?

AMY

Three.

(Judith retreats into her office and closes the door)

POPPY

(to Amy)

You're getting pretty quick with the phones, sweetie. And you just had your first staff meeting! How exciting.

AMY

And I live to tell the tale!

POPPY

You're a smart one, I can tell. I've been around a long time. You're going to be a good cookie.

AMY

Nick doesn't seem to think so. Haven't had two words from him.

POPPY

You'll have to get used to him and his moods.

AMY

But he's a legend! I mean, everyone knows about him! I never imagined he'd be so rude all the time...

POPPY

There used to be a time when Nick got to do what he wanted. Consequently, he's developed some bad habits. And, Judith's new, you see? He's not used to her yet.

AMY

What's there to get used to?

POPPY

Well, for starters, Judith's a woman! She's the first female General Manager the Festival has ever had so, clearly, things are a'changin' around here. Change makes any fella uncomfortable. But you my dear should just focus on getting to know your job. You're going to have a busy couple of days!

AMY

Okay, I'll try.

(Lisa enters the office carrying a small, cumbersome bench. James follows her yelling and smoking)

LISA

Judith told me that the sky's the limit so, this is the plan!

JAMES

Did she ask you to make it look completely PATHETIC, Lisa?

(James tries to enter the office with his cigarette)

POPPY

Finish that smoke outside, mister.

(He remains outside the door, inhaling deeply. The phone rings)

AMY

Good morning, The Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking. Well, that sounds very interesting sir but we're not that kind of Festival. Well, we're a Classical music festival so we don't really let vendors set up booths or anything. Okay, sure. If we have any cotton candy needs in the future, I'm sure we'll keep you in mind.

LISA

Poppy, what do you think of this bench?

POPPY

(briefly considering the bench)

Well, I'm not really an expert. It looks...like an antique! I suppose it could be mighty attractive if you refinished it. Right now it looks like you got it out of a dumpster.

LISA

I bought it from the antique store on Ridge Street! I swear that guy is a hoarder. He didn't even want me to buy it! I just think the Main needs a spot for people to sit while they are waiting for the house to open.

(James enters, blowing out his last drag behind him)

JAMES

Yeah, ONE bench is really going to spruce the place up.

LISA

I don't have just one bench...I have some shrubs too.

JAMES

(sarcastically)

Ooooh! SHRUBS! Look, Lisa, if you could just focus on the marketing numbers instead of this ridiculous courtyard--

LISA

Amy!

AMY

Yes?

LISA

What do you think of this ANTIQUE bench?

JAMES

It doesn't matter what she thinks of the bench...

LISA

(louder)

Just come and sit on it. She's allowed to sit on it, isn't she?

(Amy gets up and sits on the bench. She wiggles from side to side and the entire bench wobbles)

AMY

It's a bit of a hazard.

JAMES

Jesus Christ!

LISA

Well, I can fix that! It just needs to be tightened.

JAMES

We can't let our demographic of patrons...

POPPY

(aside to Amy)

...he means the elderly...

JAMES

... risk their lives sitting in our Main Stage courtyard. It's an eight hundred person venue! The bushes and THE bench won't be enough!

(The phone rings. James and Lisa continue under Amy)

AMY

Good morning, The Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking. One moment please.

(She holds)

Poppy, it's for you. Line two.

JAMES

Look, you can do whatever you want but when I show up at the Main and it looks like shit. The bench and the bush are outta here.

POPPY

(perturbed)

Good grief, James.

(She picks up the phone)

Hello? Hi Dax.

(slowly and patiently)

You are ushering THIS FRIDAY for opening night...yes. Wear your black bottoms and a white top. No, black on the bottom and white on the top. Yes. Report to the main stage at 6:15pm. ON FRIDAY. Okay, b'bye.

LISA

Not if I've spent three days setting it up, you won't!

JAMES

You should be NUMBER CRUNCHING, not wasting time on this!

(Judith emerges from her office to break up the fight. The phone rings)

AMY

Good morning, The Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking. Yes, he is.

JUDITH

Could you two cool it for a second? I could hardly hear Nick on the other line and he was having a fit!

AMY

May I ask who's calling? One moment.

(she holds)

James? Peter from Mosaic Inc. is on line four for you. He says it's about a sponsorship deal.

(Pause)

JUDITH

He wants to talk to James? That's not possible--

JAMES

(James picks up the phone before Judith can finish)

Hello Peter! How are you? Well, yes, we're all in full swing here.

(Judith glares at him and gestures from him to pass over the phone)

Well, yes, I'm sure Italy is nice this time of year. No, no, I've never been. Tuscany! How nice! Well, that's good news. Actually, Peter, I'm going to have to pass you to Judith.

(Bitterly)

No, it isn't on my portfolio anymore. Judith has taken that on. Yes, she's here.

(He puts him on hold and lights a cigarette in the office)

POPPY

James, don't smoke insi—

(He blows out the smoke into the office and gives the rickety bench a sharp drop kick. It breaks. James storms out.)

LISA

(calling after him)

Damnit James! It was a nice bench! You owe my twenty bucks!

JUDITH

What's this guy's name again?

AMY

Peter from Mosaic.

JUDITH

Mosaic...right.

(She goes into her office and takes up the call)

LISA

(starting to hyperventilate as she tries to fix the bench)

He...needs...to...stop...criticizing...ev...ery...thing...I...do...just...because...he...was....demoted.

POPPY

(soothingly)

He wasn't demoted, he was...reassigned. It was for his own good, Lisa. You know that.

LISA

I don't care anymore. Since Judith took over Development, he's been a fucking nightmare! I wish he would relapse so he'd be off my goddamn back.

(Lisa gathers her bench and heads toward the door, bumping it on her way.)

POPPY

You don't mean that. And watch your language, missy. We have a youth in the office now.

LISA

Shove off, Poppy. He's not breathing down your neck every day; double checking everything you do, making his own deadlines, this ad is TOO DARK, this one is TOO cluttered...Last time I checked I was the marketing MANAGER...I've got enough do deal with. I only took this job because Judith promised that I wouldn't be treated like a summer student anymore.

(She looks at Amy)

You'd be better off waiting tables, Amy.

(She exits.)

POPPY

(flustered)

Look at the time. Amy, I have to go to a House Manager training session. Look, try...not to listen to Lisa. She can get very...upset...she's not in the best place right now--

(The phone rings)

AMY

Good Morning, the Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking. Yes, please hold.

(she yells)

Judith! Line 2!

JUDITH

(from inside her office)

Got it!

POPPY

Lisa just has... a lot of feelings. She makes mountains out of molehills, do you know what I mean?

(Judith jolts out of her office)

JUDITH

I have to get up the Main. That was one of the Singers! Nick is having a tirade. He's trying to get the choir to refuse to sing for Katrina! Guard the office, Amy. I'm on cell. If that Peter calls back, make sure James doesn't deal with him.

POPPY

(quietly to Amy)

We'll talk later.

(Poppy follows Judith out. Pause on Amy alone in the quiet of the office. She sighs. James returns to find the office empty, save Amy.)

JAMES

Was I gone that long?

AMY

(nervous)

Judith went up to the Main because Nick's having a fit and Poppy went to do some kind of training.

JAMES

(he wasn't listening)

I'm right, right? I've been asking her for those marketing numbers for two weeks! Some of us would be pleased to have her job. She's wasting her time on a courtyard? Shrubs?! Ridiculous.

AMY

Poppy said that she...I mean Lisa, isn't in a good place right now.

JAMES

Ha! She's not the only one. That's typical, typical Lisa. Thinks she's the only one with problems. You know, she has it pretty good here. It's not the Festival's problem that she went tits up in Toronto and had to move back to her hometown. I still can't believe the Festival hired her again!

(James stops himself, realizing who he's talking to. Long, awkward pause)

You know, I went to UofT too.

AMY

(brightening)

Really? Did you like it?

JAMES

I did. For the two years that I was there.

AMY

Oh, you didn't finish?

JAMES

Ha! Nope. Do you think I'd be working here if I had a degree?

AMY

This seems like a nice place to work.

JAMES

Whoa! Doesn't take much to impress you, does it?

AMY

It's a little rough around the edges.

JAMES

It's a train wreck, kiddo. Just wait until Friday. Forty-two concerts in three weeks.

AMY

It sounds exhilarating. I'll take anything over essays, lectures, residence.

JAMES

Well, watch out. This place will eat you alive if you're not careful.

AMY

It can't be that bad.

JAMES

That's what Judith said when she started too. Did she tell you that her marriage is ending because of this place?

(The phone rings and rings)

You better get that.

(Amy answers the phone.)

AMY

Good Morning the Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking. Oh, hello Peter.

(James looks up)

She had to step out to the Main for a minute. Can she call you back? Sure, I can put those tickets aside for you too. What number can she reach you at? Okay.

(She hangs up. Long, awkward pause)

Um, so Judith's marriage is ending?

JAMES

You didn't hear it from me.

AMY

That's awful.

JAMES

Well, when you work sixteen-hour days, what can you expect?

AMY

I still feel bad for her.

JAMES

That will wear off.

AMY

That's harsh!

JAMES

She's dug her own grave! She's not willing to work less to make it work.

(he points to the phone)

She's taking on more work! Development is a full-time position! Still excited about your job?

AMY

As a matter of fact, yes.

JAMES

That will wear off too.

AMY

(joking)

You're not cynical at all!

JAMES

No, I'm...what does Judith say all the time? I'm...

AMY

Seasoned?

JAMES

Ha! Yes! Seasoned.

AMY

Well, I like the idea of doing something different.

JAMES

Well, this place sure is different.

AMY

Judith told me that I can organize things how I like. Look, I've already made a new spreadsheet for ticket sales.

JAMES

(as if he's been blinded)

And I can see you've colour coded it.

AMY

Hey! It's not that bad.

JAMES

I never colour code. Makes things too...

AMY

Cheery? Happy? Lovely? I colour code everything.

JAMES

How old are you?

AMY

Nineteen but I'll be twenty in the fall.

JAMES

(he nods)

Nothing, I guess. It's just not for me.

(The phone rings. Amy picks it up.)

AMY

Good Afternoon, Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking.

(Blackout.)

ACT 1
Scene 4

POPPY

(Poppy addresses the audience on her way to training)

Just before my second summer was when the headaches started. I'd get this amazing pain behind my right eye. I didn't think anything of it at first but, slowly, my eyeball started to poke out of the socket more than usual. That's when I knew that something was very wrong. But, you see, I didn't want to lose my job at the Festival and have to sit at home all day so, I didn't go get it looked at. I wanted to work. You know, sometimes I think women value their work more than men. I can't tell you the number of times that I've heard a man wish he didn't have to work. "Why did we ever complain? We used to be able to sit around at home, eat snacks, take naps, watch TV"...like some kind of indoor cat. What they don't realize is that, for us, our work is a break from our other work. Our home job: making things nice for everyone. I was so desperate to stop making things nice.

(Beat)

I was eventually forced to take a sick leave from the Festival. The tumour behind my eye was the size of a golf ball. Some people said it was the chain smoking, others said it was the stress of over-working, some think it was the time I spent in the office...with the mould and the mice. My neighbour, Sue, thought it was those bright pink wafer cookies I'd eat for dinner. "The trans fats" she'd say, the synthetic orange and pink dye.

(Beat)

But, I know now it wasn't any of those things. It was the fear of being at home for the rest of my life. The dishes, the laundry, the sex, the vacuuming, changing the bed sheets. I was so scared of not being able to work at a job I really did love. I guess all that fear started to collect in my head, like the bits of plastic in the ocean that collect in whirlpools until they make a floating island the size of Texas...

(Beat)

They shrunk it. It's still there but the headaches are not as bad anymore. My husband came to tell me he was leaving during my first chemotherapy treatment. Guess he couldn't stand the thought of making things nice for me. A year or so ago, once I was feeling better, I started back at the Festival. Part time was all I could bargain for. But, I don't mind it. Home isn't such a frightening place anymore.

(Blackout.)

ACT 1
Scene 5

(The next day, Amy sits at her desk. Judith enters the office carrying a stack of music.)

JUDITH

I'm hiding all the Berlioz scores in my office. If I don't, Nick 's going to try to rehearse it. When Katrina comes in tomorrow, remind me where I've put them. Now he has to rehearse the Bach rep.

AMY

(consults the brochure)

When is the Bach again? Sunday?

JUDITH

Yes, the later show.

AMY

I still can't get all these concerts straight.

(listing them off)

Mozart for Organ, Caribbean drummers, the Juniper String Quartet...Bach!

JUDITH

The Bach is dreadful right now.

AMY

What? How can a professional choir sound bad? Well, maybe I'm not the best person to explain that to. I can hardly tell when a piano is out of tune.

JUDITH

I thought you liked Classical music.

AMY

Oh, I do! I just have trouble telling the difference between amazing and mediocre.

JUDITH

Well, enjoy that. Once you know the difference, you're disappointed most of the time.

(The phone rings)

AMY

Good Afternoon, The Festival on the Grand—Hi Nick.
Sure...

(She starts to scribble something down)

How many? Two hundred?! No, I understand. Okay.

(he's hung up)

Bye...

JUDITH

What did he want?

AMY

He wants two hundred chicken wings.

JUDITH

What?

AMY

Something about wanting them for the post-Berlioz reception?

JUDITH

But we've already pre-ordered the ten pizzas he asked for yesterday!

AMY

He wants chicken wings now.

JUDITH

Well that's just great. Wouldn't it be great to be musically gifted to the point where you can treat everyone else like your own personal staff?

AMY

I don't mind getting the wings.

JUDITH

I know you don't. It's just the principle of it.

AMY

Maybe I should change career paths and become a conductor.

JUDITH

Me too. All you have to do is show up and wave your arms around a few times, go to parties, maybe stop by a few universities to pick up your honorary doctorates. It's the difference between floating down the rapids in the Gorge and jumping off the cliffs into the quarry.

AMY

It's a pretty shallow quarry.

JUDITH

I know.

AMY

When is James coming back?

JUDITH

I don't know. I'm not even sure where he went. He's probably wherever Lisa is. James likes to...manage people since--

(She hesitates)

AMY

You don't have to explain it to me—

JUDITH

James used to be in the choir. Well, James used to be the choir. But he's had some personal struggles lately that--

AMY

James doesn't drink anymore, does he?

JUDITH

(Beat)

I figured you'd been paying attention. No, James is sober.

AMY

Everyone who's sober has a story.

(Pause)

JUDITH

You see, Amy, unfortunately, this Festival isn't just a music festival. It's also Gambrel's annual drinking festival. The choir, Nick, everyone parties just as much as they work. James just got caught up in it all. It was Poppy who dragged him to rehab.

AMY

But, he can still sing, can't he? I don't see how being sober--

JUDITH

It's a trigger.

(Pause)

James has a lot of triggers.

AMY

I see.

JUDITH

He's a good man. But he's fresh out of treatment and always close to the edge.

AMY

Someone should tell that to Lisa

JUDITH

She knows.

(Lisa and James are heard arguing)

JAMES

It was just a suggestion! Calm down!

LISA

Don't tell me to calm down!

JUDITH

(to Amy)

Brace yourself

(James and Lisa enter. They stop arguing. They both go to their desks. The tension is unbearable)

JAMES

(calmly)

I need those numbers, Lisa.

(Lisa explodes)

LISA

I stayed up all night last night fixing that stupid bench. It looks good up at the Main. It looks GOOD! I'm even getting some more plants donated to fill it out a bit.

JAMES

You had it set up right next to the port-o-potties! I was simply moving it UPWIND!

LISA

I just want you to leave me alone.

(Long pause. Poppy enters the office)

POPPY

I caved. The Austrian is staying with me. I'll board my cat for the month...

(notices the tension)

Did someone die?

JUDITH

Of course not. Thanks for the update, Pop. I'll tell Nick not to invite any Austrians next year.

POPPY

Or that Brazilian flute troupe. They billeted with Ingrid and she still can't get the stains out of her carpet.

(Nick enters)

NICK

Where are they?

JUDITH

Nick, you're supposed to be rehearsing at the Main!

NICK

I am rehearsing at the Main! The whole choir is still there. Where are the scores?

JUDITH

You can't keep them overtime! We can't afford to pay overtime...

NICK

(rooting around the office)

I know they're here somewhere. What have you done with them?

JUDITH

Don't be ridiculous, Nick. I have better things to do than hide music.

(She retreats into her office. Nick follows her and slams the door. Muffled yelling is heard in the office.)

NICK

They won't sing for her! If you'll just give me the music, I can get to work! You are so unbelievably frustrating--

JUDITH

Why Nick? Because I'm the girl in your little clubhouse?

(Yelling continues)

POPPY

Oh dear...

(Amy rifles through the bookshelf next to her desk and pulls out a CD. She tosses it into the CD player. The choir performing "Silent Night" is heard)

LISA

Christmas? Really?

JUDITH

Have you ever thought about what the staff wants to see at the Festival? They need to feel valued too!

NICK

Then start a fucking support group.

(He lights a cigarette)

JUDITH

(sarcastically)

You know, maybe I should. For 40 years, most of your staff have been underappreciated, under paid women! I'm sure I'd have a line up of gals needing some therapy!

(Yelling continues. Amy cranks up the music. It drowns out Judith and Nick's argument. The CD starts to skip. Amy advances to the next track. "O Holy Night" skips. She takes the CD out of the player.)

NICK

You can drop the fucking history lesson.

JUDITH

Fine. Let's switch to current events. Do you know how much convincing it took to get Mary-Beth to fund us again? After the scene you made at the Gala last year? The only card I could play was that we needed the money to pay the staff!

NICK

What about the Singers? They need to be paid too!

JUDITH

That comes out of your budget, Nick.

(Amy finds another CD and puts it into the player. Tavener's "God Is With Us" blasts into the office. Lisa looks over at Amy)

AMY

I'm sorry! All I can find are Christmas CDs!

(Judith's voice competes with the music.)

JUDITH

HA! No, I guess babysitting is my job! Don't spend too much money, don't let rehearsal go over, don't come to rehearsal drunk, don't sleep with choir members...

(A deep, baritone voice echoes into the office from the CD player. James looks up from his desk, recognizing his own voice. Nick opens Judith's office door to leave.)

POPPY

(to Amy)

Sweetie, maybe change it to a different song—

(James comes over to the CD player and opens it. The office is silent. James takes the CD out of the player. He looks around the office—everyone is staring at him. He cracks the CD in half and leaves the office.)

ACT 1

Scene 6

JAMES

When you're drunk for decades, and I'm not exaggerating when I say decades, you don't remember big chunks of your life. I guess that's pretty obvious but, it's true. Huge swaths of my life feel like dreams. Foggy, distant dreams. I wouldn't call it like having amnesia or Alzheimer's. I've always known who I am but, I don't remember doing anything. It's like when you drive from one place to another but you're so distracted or tired that you don't actually remember driving there. Highway hypnosis. I guess that wouldn't be so bad if there were lots of things in your life that you wanted to forget. But, for me, I would give anything to remember what it feels like to be up on a stage. I so want to remember that. All I ever wanted to do was sing. When you're a singer, you don't have to depend on anything else but this.

(He puts his hand on his chest)

It's absolute freedom. It's the only thing that ever made me happy. Often, I'll try and remember what it feels like. To have my voice fill a room crammed with 800 people, all their eyes on me. Except, all I get is the distant memory of the feeling of hot lights on my face. That's it. Hot lights.

(He looks down at the cracked CD in his hand)

I've never liked hearing my voice. It's like looking at your own blood and realizing that it used to be inside of you. But now, more than ever, I can't stand it. I get this visceral reaction, like I need to throw up everywhere. It's uncanny; on the one hand, it's completely familiar, like being reunited with your own child but, more so, it's totally alien, something that you want to destroy.

ACT 1
Scene 7

(The day before the Festival is chaos. Poppy and Amy enter. Lisa sits at her desk, staring at the computer screen blankly. She's eating orange and pink wafer cookies)

POPPY

A sold out opening night is guaranteed chaos. We can't have a single ticket mix up.

AMY

Great. Well, I think I have it all organized—

(She sees Lisa)

Lisa?

POPPY

Were you here all night?

LISA

This job really is cursed, isn't it? I feel like pulling my own hair out...

AMY

Cursed?

POPPY

Lisa, go home and get some sleep!

LISA

I can't. I haven't had any confirmations from press, James is holding the Berlioz program notes hostage and...it's hard to sit alone in a house you're going to lose. And look, I've come to a more important conclusion. I'm convinced that my job is cursed. Every marketing manger has gone off her rocker.

POPPY

Now, let's not exaggerate, Lisa. You need to go home—

LISA

I'm not! I'm not exaggerating. Each woman seems to only last 2 years...after two years, a new one is brought in. Elise 2000-2002, got emphysema from chain-smoking her way through the summer. Jane 2002-2004, had a nervous breakdown and disappeared half way through the Festival and ended up in Toronto a year later.

(to Poppy)

You 2004-2006 forced to take a leave because of your cancer. Pat 2006-2008, left because...oh, well...rumour is that Nick felt her up at a party and she went hysterical. The Board asked her to leave to save face...

AMY

That's disgusting...

LISA

Joyce 2008-2010 left for 'personal reasons' and ended up dead of an aneurysm a month later...

POPPY

Lisa...

LISA

Yes...LISA 2010 to 2012...jumps into the Gorge after pulling her own hair out.

POPPY

Stop being so alarmist. I didn't get a tumour being the marketing manager. There are just some things in life we can't control.

LISA

This place is toxic. Figures I would end up here.

POPPY

Well, when you need money, you need money. There's not many places to get a job in Gambrel. Unless you want to wait tables at the River's Edge.

LISA

Some days I think about applying to be their dishwasher. I'd rather scrape plates than work with James. That's right WITH, not FOR!

POPPY

Stop being so superstitious. Judith doesn't need you getting all dramatic a day before we open.

LISA

The other night I had a dream that my courtyard caught fire and the whole Main went up in flames and I could hear James laughing at me. It was awful. What do you think that means?

POPPY

It means nothing except that you're over-worked and not taking care of yourself. What are you eating?

LISA

(trying to separate the wafer bit from the icing with her teeth)

They remind me of my childhood and they're on sale at the P&E

POPPY

I can't count the number of times I've invited you over for supper...

LISA

I don't need you to take me in like some stray cat, Pop.

POPPY

Well, stop acting like one and I won't have to. When was the last time you showered?

LISA

Why you offering a sponge bath too? Want a cookie, Amy?

AMY

Sure.

(She takes one)

POPPY

(joking)

Once you start with those, it's the beginning of the end for you, sweetie.

LISA

Jesus...we open TOMORROW. I have so many inserts to print and my computer is...frozen.
Jesus.

*(James enters blowing his last blow of smoke out the door behind him. Pause.
James and Lisa don't acknowledge each other. Awkward beat.)*

POPPY

(continues talking shop)

So, Amy, you're expected to stay 15 minutes after the concert has started to accommodate late comers...

JAMES

Where's Judith?

AMY

(showing him a note)

She's going to be late. Some appointment with a Mr. Brody?

(James and Poppy exchange glances)

Who's Mr. Brody?

POPPY

He's a divorce lawyer, sweetie.

AMY

(deflated)

Oh...

LISA

Toxic...absolutely toxic.

(Nick enters. He dumps a stack of music on Amy's desk.)

NICK

(oddly chipper)

If everyone could just stay put for the a little while. I'd like to...call a staff meeting!

POPPY

Well, Nick, normally we have staff meetings on...

NICK

The day before the Festival opens seems like the opportune time to have a meeting.

(to Amy)

Don't you think, love?

(Beat)

AMY

Uhhh, yes...sure...

NICK

(tossing Amy five dollars)

We'll need a coffee run. Can't have a meeting without one. I'll have an extra large...

(Judith enters the office. She's taken aback by a gathered staff)

JUDITH

Sort of calm for the day before opening isn't it? Nick I thought you were in rehearsal...

NICK

I've moved rehearsal today...and extended it. We have a lot of work to do before tomorrow.

JUDITH

Katrina's flight arrives in 50 minutes. I have a car meeting her at the airport.

NICK

(to Amy)

Extra large.

JUDITH

We have coffee here, Nick.

(She takes the bill from Amy and gives it back to Nick)

Amy, I need you to print off the house map and patron list for opening. I don't know about the rest of you but I can't afford to stand around.

(She heads for her office)

NICK

I've called a staff meeting, Judith. We're poised for a meeting. If you could join us, please?

JUDITH

What's going on Nick? I have to go over Katrina's rider.

POPPY

I confirmed her reservation at Quarry Hall. They gave her a suite!

JUDITH

They better have.

LISA

Her manager sent me her bio for the insert.

(pointedly)

So when James is finished putting it through such a vigorous and lengthy editing process, I will add it to the house programme.

JUDITH

James, we've been through holding inserts hostage. Sounds good, team.

(She consults the rider)

Now I just need to track down pear-infused Japanese Sencha tea and candied ginger for her dressing room. Amy, get going on those print-outs, please.

(She heads for her office.)

NICK

I've cancelled Katrina.

(Beat. The phone rings. Amy is too shocked to answer it. It stops. Tableau, spotlight on Poppy)

POPPY

When I heard they were bringing Judith on as the GM, I was elated! Finally, some change, you know? Judith represented so much change...a new vision, a new mandate. I mean, she was a woman! Finally, the second wave had made it to Gambrel. Well, sort of.

(Scene resumes)

JUDITH

What?

NICK

I'm taking my place at the helm. I've cancelled Katrina.

(The phone rings again. To Amy)

The phone is ringing.

AMY

(snapping out of it)

Good Afternoon, The Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking. I mean, good morning. I'm sorry, opening night is sold out. Yes, they sold very quickly this year. Were there any other concerts you were interested in? Well, do think of us next year.

(She hangs up the phone. Pause.)

JUDITH

Does the Board know about this?

NICK

This was an artistic call

(Tableau. Poppy continues)

POPPY

Though, even with her here, most of the time, I'm still so disappointed in this Festival, even though I've loved it for years. It's like being disappointed in your own child. It's hard to love something so much but also want to smack it upside the head.

(Scene resumes)

JUDITH

I see

(Beat. Calmly)

I truly think you're making a huge mistake

NICK

Well, it's been made.

JUDITH

So, this is how it's going to be?

NICK

You didn't leave me with many options, Judy.

JUDITH

Don't call me Judy.

NICK

(to Poppy)

You can call Quarry Hall to cancel. That should save us some money.

JUDITH

I can't believe you did this. You can't just cancel artists! They're under contract! Do you know much this is going to cost the organization?

NICK

You need to calm down...

LISA

What are we going to tell the patrons?

NICK

Don't you start too, love.

LISA

LISA! My name is LISA!

(He looks at Lisa for a moment)

JUDITH

Nick! Look at me. This is about me, isn't it?

NICK

This was in the best interest of the Festival.

JUDITH

It makes us look like idiots. You don't think Katrina will tell her circle about this?

NICK

California is a long way from Gambrel.

JUDITH

So is your brain.

NICK

Now, now...

JUDITH

Look at all these tickets! They're all coming for HER!

NICK

(shrugs)

Program subject to change without notice.

(Tableau. Poppy continues)

POPPY

It's days like this when I'm reminded that nothing has really changed. Haven't we just gained more arguments, disagreements, paradigm clashes? It's a fruitless battle of the sexes. In many ways, it's the same as it always was. It will always be the way it always was.

(Scene resumes)

NICK

My Berlioz is Juno-nominated.

JUDITH

Nick, please come into my office. We need to figure this out. You've got to call her back--

NICK

We don't want to send her mixed messages.

(He turns to go. Pause.)

JUDITH

STOP! Stop this, Nick! If you're upset with me, that's fine. Don't take it out on everyone else, or on the Festival! This is your Festival we're talking about here, right?

NICK

Precisely. I'll expect the Berlioz scores up at the Main this afternoon.

(He turns to leave)

JUDITH

Can't let go of the boys' club can you?

(Tableau. Poppy resumes)

POPPY

When I was fifteen, my mother came home from work one summer day and told me that her boss had raped her in an office supply closet. After it was over, she just went back to her desk and worked the rest of the day. I remember her looking at me and saying to me that nothing would stop her from getting her job done.

(Scene resumes)

(quietly)

I can't...I can't...

LISA

(calling after Nick)

I'll need your write up for the insert

(overlapping)

NICK

Last year's will do.

POPPY

I can't...

JUDITH

I know, Pop. I can't believe it either.

POPPY

No, I can't...I can't see...

(Poppy starts to wilt. She clutches her head. Lisa and Amy rush to her)

POPPY

I feel so strange. I can't...I can't see!

(Poppy collapses to the ground)

LISA

Shit.

JUDITH

(to James)

Call an ambulance. NOW!

JUDITH

Poppy! Poppy!

(James runs the phone)

JAMES

(on the phone)

We need an ambulance...uhhh...heart attack, maybe, I don't know.

(yelling out to the room)

What should I tell them?

LISA

(to James)

Just tell them to come!

JUDITH

Tell them...stroke, aneurism...something like that.

LISA

Cancer. Tell them her cancer is back.

(Judith looks at Lisa, shocked)

JUDITH

What?

LISA

She's been refusing treatment.

JUDITH

For how long?

LISA

Six months.

JUDITH

Why didn't you tell me?

LISA

Hang in there, Pop.

(to Judith)

Because she told me not to.

JAMES

Uhhh, cancer-related maybe. Or a stroke. Something with her head.

LISA

Tell them it's in her eye.

JUDITH

Amy, go outside and meet the ambulance.

(Amy runs outside. Judith and Lisa still call out Poppy's name)

She's unconscious. Shit...she's out.

NICK

(hesitantly)

What...what should I do?

(No one has heard him)

LISA

(starting to cry)

I told her this place would kill her.

JUDITH

Shut up, Lisa. This isn't the time.

(Sound of an ambulance approaching)

LISA

Poppy! Poppy, wake up!

(Lisa violently shakes Poppy's limp shoulders. Judith drags Lisa away.)

JUDITH

James, come here...

(She pulls him to the ground. She feels for Poppy's pulse)

I can't feel anything. Start compressions, James.

(Sound of an ambulance gets louder)

LISA

Poppy!

JUDITH

One, two, three, four...

(James pushes hard on Poppy's chest. Lisa wails. The swirling lights of an ambulance. Nick, stone cold, looks back at the staff all trying to help Poppy. He closes the door behind him with a loud bang.)

JUDITH

Ten, eleven, twelve...

(Blackout.)

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2
Scene 1

(Opening day, very early morning in the office. James and Nick enter)

JAMES

You're the one who's going to have to explain it to the sponsors. Bill and Tina Lockland gave five thousand dollars to bring Katrina to Gambrel.

NICK

We've cancelled dozens of acts in the past.

JAMES

This is different.

NICK

Judith never had the right to book her in the first place. She can deal with the Locklands.

JAMES

What was she supposed to do?

NICK

Just do it the way we've always done!

JAMES

What a notion...

NICK

Weren't they supposed to clean up your sarcasm in rehab?

JAMES

Fuck off, Nick.

NICK

I see they didn't cover manners either.

JAMES

You know what they covered.

NICK

James, I really wish you'd stop playing the wilted flower around here. You didn't drink that much...

JAMES

You're kidding me, right?

NICK

We all drank! The parties, the galas, the late nights! How can you not? Remember when Scott Valentine jumped into the quarry after polishing off my best single malt? Little fucker...

JAMES

Yeah, and almost snapped his neck in half.

NICK

Remember the women, James? Can't beat a desperate soprano. We were goddamn royalty! Gambrel was a ghost town until we made a splash.

JAMES

We?

NICK

Of course!

JAMES

You've never given a shit about me.

NICK

How can you say that? I cultivated you, James. That voice took a lot of grooming.

JAMES

I'm pretty sure it was a two-person effort.

NICK

Talent isn't much use if it's not handled by a professional.

JAMES

Well, you shouldn't have bothered.

NICK

You have been a miserable sod since you got out.

JAMES

I just mean that if I hadn't been holding up the choir, you might have noticed that I wasn't...

NICK

That you weren't what? On top of your game? James, you were fantastic! Concert after concert. I've never seen anything like that in my entire career. You just got better and better.

JAMES

Must have been something amazing, seeing as it almost cost me my life.

NICK

I don't know how you did it, James! Shit-faced at four in the morning and then giving the most amazing fucking Britten concert at two o'clock later that same day!

JAMES

I don't remember that.

NICK

I want you to sing tonight.

(Long pause. The phone rings and rings)

Where's that summer girl when you need her?

(They ignore the phone. James is in shock)

JAMES

You can't be serious.

NICK

You're ready. You know you are. It's time for you to rise from the ashes, James. A fucking phoenix from the ashes!

JAMES

It's not going to happen, Nick.

(Beat. He turns to leave)

NICK

It's not the Berlioz without you. I mean, my Berlioz is award-winning but, without the right bass, it won't be it's usual triumph.

JAMES

You're unbelievable. You can save the rest of your pitch. I've been through too much do let you shit all over me. I'm not going back to that, Nick. I'm not.

NICK

After everything that we've been through together...

JAMES

Quit saying 'together' like it means something! I know you, Nick. This isn't going to happen.

(He goes to leave)

NICK

Do it for her, James. Sing for Poppy! If you won't sing for me, sing for her. It's the Berlioz, James. The Berlioz.

JAMES

See? That's what just makes you such an ignorant...

(he stops himself)

Poppy is the last person who would want me to sing.

NICK

James, what's the point of living if you don't live? It's one concert! You don't have a problem. The sooner you call off the pity party, the sooner we can all get back to normal.

(Beat)

This Berlioz needs to be perfect, James. Perfect. The future of the Festival is hinged on it, on you.

(James, frustrated, exits, slamming the door behind him.)

ACT 2
Scene 2

(Nick sits alone in the office. He puts the Berlioz Requiem on the CD player. He becomes engrossed in the music. He conducts an invisible choir and orchestra. Lisa enters. Nick goes to the CD player and turns down the music.)

LISA

Why are you here so early?

NICK

Can't the Artistic Director spend some time in the office?

LISA

Of course. You're just not usually here.

(Pause. Lisa goes to her desk. She turns on her computer)

NICK

I was practicing for tonight.

LISA

Right. I forgot about that. I have to change the insert.

(She looks at the back of the CD case)

Practicing to your own recording?

NICK

Of course. Only the best.

LISA

(closing her eyes and soaking up the technically superb recording)

The Berlioz is Poppy's favourite. Did you know that?

(She looks over at Nick, who isn't listening to her. She impatiently tries to warm up her computer.)

The hospital didn't have anywhere for me to plug in my laptop so that means Lisa didn't get anything done last night.

(Long pause. Lisa clicks her mouse feverishly)

NICK

I can see why you're upset with me.

LISA

(taken aback)

I'm not upset with you. Well, I am. I'm upset about Katrina. And that you didn't come to see Pop last night.

NICK

(incredulous)

I can't spend the night before a concert in a hospital waiting room. Do you know how many germs are floating around in there?

LISA

Her cancer has spread. It's all over her brain.

NICK

Is she awake?

LISA

No. The doctors said she collapsed from exhaustion and stress. It must be exhausting knowing that you're dying.

NICK

There are just some things in life we can't control.

LISA

Apparently not.

(Pause. Lisa starts to work.)

NICK

Lisa?

(She looks up from her computer. Her name is a bullet.)

LISA

(bitterly)

Shouldn't you give Poppy credit for that?

(Nick looks puzzled)

You haven't addressed me by name in...

NICK

Years?

LISA

Years.

NICK

But, did you really think I'd forgotten you?

LISA

Seeing as you introduced yourself to me when I got back, yeah, I was pretty sure.

NICK

(remembering)

You were going to the city.

LISA

Yes.

NICK

To be an actress?

LISA

To write music.

NICK

Music, eh? You should have showed me some of it!

LISA

Guess I should have.

(Pause)

NICK

How long has it been?

LISA

Twenty years.

NICK

Twenty years.

LISA

I was nineteen.

NICK

Nineteen? You were older than that.

LISA

I remember how old I was.

NICK

That made me...

LISA

Thirty-five.

NICK

Well, who's counting?

LISA

Look, let's not rehash the past. I have to get to work.

(She turns from him)

NICK

Lisa?

(Another bullet. She turns back)

You need to be strong for Poppy, now. If there's anything I can do to help...you let me know.

LISA

(welling up. She puts her face in her hands)

If she dies, Nick, I will lose it.

(Nick comes closer to her.)

NICK

Just come here.

(Lisa cries as he kisses her. She holds onto him like he's all that's keeping her standing. Judith walks into the office in the same clothes she was wearing the night before. Nick and Lisa quickly break apart. Pause.)

Well, I should be off to...to prepare...for tonight.

(He exits. Judith goes to the CD player and turns off the Berlioz)

JUDITH

This isn't the time to act like a teenager.

LISA

We were just talking.

JUDITH

About what?

LISA

He can see that I'm upset, Judith.

JUDITH

Once that door is opened, it's impossible to close. You of all people should know that.

LISA

Actually, no, I don't. That door closed pretty quickly in my case.

JUDITH

He doesn't care about you.

LISA

I knew you'd say that.

JUDITH

Find another way to express your grief. Go buy a package of those disgusting cookies or something.

LISA

Grief? She's still alive, Judith.

JUDITH

I know that! You weren't the only one who spent all night in the hospital.

(Beat)

LISA

Look, I know I shouldn't get involved with him but he's always been good to me.

JUDITH

And that makes you feel special?

LISA

Why is it so unfathomable that Nick would be interested in me?

JUDITH

You're young and pretty. That's all there is to it.

LISA

He remembered that I went to Toronto.

JUDITH

And didn't notice when you got back.

LISA

But maybe—

JUDITH

Lisa! Listen to yourself! Just you wait. You won't be only one that Nick sees something special in this summer.

(Lisa goes back to her desk. She feverishly clicks her mouse. Judith goes into her office and closes the door. She addresses the audience.)

If she thinks that a teenage fling with an older man is love, she's got another thing coming. When Poppy told me about their little history, I wanted to vomit. She was nineteen! It's completely unacceptable. I'm not saying that I know anything about love but I certainly know it is not that. It is not that.

(Beat)

But, then again, leaving your partner because you want dinner on the table more often isn't love either. But I guess neither is complaining about how you run a little backwards, rural music Festival for two hours before you even ask him about his day. We've filed all the paper work. Feels good to get that off my plate. This was supposed to be a little job to ease me into retirement; instead it's become the undoing of so many things in my life.

(Beat)

What keeps me up at night isn't that I've lost him; it's the worry about what I'm going to lose next.

(Blackout.)

ACT 2

Scene 3

(Amy sits alone in the office. She juggles the phones)

AMY

(on the phone)

Judith will be back in a couple minutes, Barb. I don't know much about the volunteer protocol. I'm sorry. I'll have her call you. When Poppy gets back, things will be back to normal. Okay. Bye. Good Afternoon, The Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking. I'm sorry, I don't understand you. Loretta Bietak? Who would you like to speak to? I'm sorry, Poppy

isn't available right now. She's—you're what? At her house? Are you part of the Austrian Ensemble?

(Amy starts to panic)

I'm so sorry but I'll need to get back to you. We've had an emergency here at the office and...I'm sorry. I'll explain it later. Just...call me back in a few minutes.
Good Afternoon, The Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking. Hello? Hello?

(She hangs up the phone. She gets up to find Judith. On her way out, she bumps into James.)

JAMES

Where do you think you're going?

(The phone rings)

AMY

The Austrian Poppy was supposed to billet needs a place to stay. She's up at Poppy's house now and no one is there and—

JAMES

Whoa, whoa, whoa. Slow down.

AMY

I need to find Judith.

JAMES

She's probably just up at the Main. She'll be back. Just, cool it for a second.

AMY

(picking up a stack of messages)

All these volunteers have called with a million questions. I didn't know anything they were asking. I didn't know what to tell them about Poppy...

JAMES

You don't need to tell them anything.

AMY

But she's dying in the hospital! We can't just pretend that she's—

JAMES

Who said anything about dying?

AMY

Lisa told me that Poppy's cancer has spread.

JAMES

Lisa is no doctor. Pop beat it before; she'll do it again.

AMY

I need to find Judith. She went to find Nick. He's added an open rehearsal today. Five-dollar ticket to hear the Berlioz dress.

JAMES

I know.

AMY

How did you know? Judith didn't even know until 10 minutes ago.

JAMES

It doesn't matter how I know.

AMY

I have to get things ready. I don't even know where to start.

JAMES

Where's Lisa? Can't she help you?

AMY

She's fixing the courtyard.

JAMES

Of course she is.

AMY

Can't you—

JAMES

I have to go to the Main.

AMY

But Judith said you were going to be here to man the office.

JAMES

Well, now I have to go to the Main, okay?

AMY

Okay.

(James looks like he's going to say something else but decides not to. He exits, leaving Amy alone again. The phone rings. She doesn't answer it. She addresses the audience)

I feel like I've been dropped into a pot of boiling water. I should just get out of here. Leave all these misfits to their own devices. Let them deal with the aftermath.

(Beat)

I'm starting to get headaches. Maybe I have a tumor too. Maybe it was that orange cookie I ate. Poppy says that this place is full of mould. Maybe the spores are giving me cancer. Poppy's cancer. Maybe it's the agony of listening to Judith and Nick go at each other's throats. Maybe it's because I haven't slept in a week. Maybe it's all the coffee I've been drinking.

(Beat)

I'm starting to realize that I haven't just been trained to sell tickets and answer the phones. I'm starting to care about this stupid Festival. I worry about it, make sacrifices for it. I mean, little ones; losing sleep, cancelling plans, eating crap food, those kinds of things. I think I caught it from Poppy; caring about the Festival. I'd so much rather not, you know? It would be so much easier not to give a shit. Why has that become so hard?

(Amy gathers her things for the rehearsal and exits. Blackout.)

ACT 2
Scene 4

(The lights come up on Nick alone in the office. He goes to the CD player and puts on the Berlioz Requiem again. The music blasts. He starts to conduct the invisible orchestra and choir. He can't get the timing right. He takes a swig from a flask that he has in his jacket. He tries again. James enters in a rush.)

JAMES

What the fuck are you doing here? The whole choir is waiting! Amy has already sold half the house in rehearsal tickets.

NICK

I just needed some quiet for a minute. Judith has been screaming at me all afternoon.

JAMES

Well, that tends to happen when you add in an open dress for a concert that, until yesterday, you weren't conducting.

NICK

We always do an open rehearsal for the Berlioz, and now that I've straightened things out with Judith, I can call it my Berlioz again.

JAMES

Well, it won't be yours if you're not there to conduct it in fifteen minutes. Judith's about to send everyone home.

(Nick fumbles on timing again. James goes to the CD player and turns down the music.)

Well, let's go then.

NICK

I just need a few more minutes

JAMES

You don't have a few more minutes.

NICK

(breaking)

James, I can't do it. I can't go up there. I thought I knew it. I used to know it. I just can't remember some of the transitions.

JAMES

The choir's done it a million times, they'll get through it.

NICK

James, I can't just get through it. Not this time. I can't just get through it.

JAMES

What's different this time?

NICK

It has to be perfect. If it's not...

JAMES

Blame it on the sopranos or something. Look, anything is better than not showing up. Just get over there. It'll come back to you once you're up there.

NICK

James, please reconsider. If you're up there, I know I can manage.

JAMES

I told you, Nick, it's not going to happen. End of story.

NICK

It will be such a triumph if you...

JAMES

You wanted the Berlioz, you got it. This has nothing to do with me. Just get your ass over the Main and do the rehearsal. You don't have a choice. There's four hundred people up there waiting for a Nick original.

NICK

But James—

(The phone rings)

JAMES

Good Afternoon, The Festival on the Grand, James speaking. I'm sorry we're sold out tonight. But, if you're here in town we have an open rehearsal of the Requiem starting in 10 minutes.

(He waves for Nick to leave)

Well, it's a dress rehearsal so Nick will do his best to get through the entire rep but he will stop if there's a spot that needs ironing. Oh, yes, we've had a sudden change in the program. Katrina wasn't able to make it to Gambrel after all. Five dollars.

(Nick takes a swig from his flask. James gapes at him.)

Yes, I'm still here. Excuse me? At the Main Stage. Yes. Okay. Bye.

(James hangs up the phone. Pause)

You're pathetic. I almost feel sorry for you.

NICK

You know how it is. Just need a little extra something.

(the phone rings again)

You better get that.

JAMES

Good Afternoon, The Festival on the Grand, James speaking. Yes, I found him. Call off the Amber Alert. He's on his way.

(James motions Nick out of the office. Nick exits.)

He was...practicing. I'll stay here. Tell Amy to wait 15 minutes after it's started. I just took a call from more people wanting tickets. It'll be fine Judith.

(He hangs up the phone and puts his head in his hands. Blackout.)

ACT 2
Scene 5

(Amy sits at her desk counting out five-dollar bills. She keeps losing track and starting over a gain. Judith and Lisa enter)

JUDITH

What the hell is the matter with him? I could just strangle him.

LISA

It's really not that big a deal, Judith.

JUDITH

(a bit too harshly)

Use your brain, Lisa! Were we AT the same rehearsal?

LISA

(defeated)

He was just being Nick.

JUDITH

He was PLASTERED! He wasn't even sort of drunk. He wasn't even "Oh, I needed a few swigs to drown the nerves." He was drunk. It was absolutely disgusting.

LISA

He was tipsy.

JUDITH

No, tipsy would have been a wave or two wrong here and there. He stumbled off the platform!

LISA

Well, it was in a vigorous part of the piece. Maybe he was just really into it.

JUDITH

He fires one of the most brilliant conductors in North America to conduct the Berlioz himself and THAT is what we get? Why didn't anyone tell me that Nick's famous Berlioz was a train wreck?

LISA

Maybe he was just nervous.

JUDITH

Oh, and I forgot to tell you what our distinguished Artistic Director said to one of the volunteers upon his arrival at the Main. This is, of course, 5 minutes after the rehearsal was supposed to start. He came up to Bonnie and, in front of all the bar volunteers, said...

(She snaps her fingers trying to remember)

Amy, what did he say? I'm too stressed to think.

AMY

"Nice tits"...

(Beat. Amy and Lisa exchange glances. Lisa giggles)

JUDITH

It's not funny! It's completely inappropriate.

AMY

Henrietta told me to tell Poppy that Bonnie said that she's not volunteering for the rest of the season.

JUDITH

Man, we need Pop back. James told me about the Austrian. She's staying at my house now. The last thing I need.

AMY

Two thousand three hundred and sixty five dollars. That's four hundred and seventy three tickets.

JUDITH

I wish they'd all stayed home.

LISA

You have to take the good with the bad sometimes.

JUDITH

What good? No, please tell me what good you're referring to.

LISA

(scrounging)

At least he got through it?

(James enters the office. He puts his hand up to stop Judith's rant)

JAMES

I'm just here to get the numbers.

(He looks at Lisa)

LISA

Here.

(She hands him an untidy file with papers sticking out of it)

JAMES

(sarcastically)

Oh, I saw someone sitting on the bench and it didn't collapse.

LISA

Are you admitting defeat?

JAMES

No. I have the numbers, don't I?

JUDITH

Has anyone called the hospital since this morning?

JAMES

I heard from Lena Quick that she's still out. She went to see her before the rehearsal.

LISA

I can't think about Poppy right now.

JUDITH

Me neither. Worrying won't do anything anyway.

(Pause. Amy picks up the phone and starts to dial)

AMY

Hi, this is Amy calling from the Festival on the Grand. I need to place an order for tonight. Chicken wings. 200.

JUDITH

Jesus!

(Judith goes into her office and closes the door. Lisa and James look over at Amy)

JAMES

I thought we had ordered pizzas.

AMY

(with her hand over the receiver)

Now he wants chicken wings

LISA

I like chicken wings.

JAMES

Of course you do.

JUDITH

(emerging from her office)

If tonight doesn't go perfectly, and I mean perfectly, we're in trouble.

AMY

(finishing her call)

I'll pick them up at ten o'clock. Make sure there are two hundred of them. Thanks! Bye.

JUDITH

How are we supposed to bounce back if Nick makes a travesty of opening night?

LISA

I bet we've bounced back from worse.

JUDITH

There's no wiggle room anymore. Any money that can go to the arts is going to the best of the best. If you're not forging new ground, you're out. Katrina was our 'new ground.'

(James gets up to leave)

JAMES

I'm going to the Main.

LISA

Why?

JAMES

I won't touch your precious little set up. I just have to check something.

JUDITH

If you see Nick tell him to stop being a coward and come see me.

AMY

And tell him I've ordered all the chicken wings.

JUDITH

I hate chicken wings.

JAMES

I have my cell.

(He leaves)

JUDITH

What's the matter with him?

LISA

(noticing the numbers file on his desk)

He didn't even take the numbers! After all that?

JUDITH

T-minus 3 hours and 24 minutes. I'm going home. I need to shower. I haven't showered since...

(She tries to remember)

Nevermind. I'll see you at the Main soon. Amy, do you need anyth—

AMY

I'm fine. I'll be fine.

JUDITH

You're a good cookie. Pop would be proud.

AMY

Thanks Judith.

(Judith exits)

LISA

I'm going too. I want to go see Pop. Do you want to come?

AMY

Am I a terrible person if I say no?

LISA

Pop won't know the difference.

AMY

I'll go tomorrow. I'd be too distracted anyway. I'm so nervous I could hurl.

(Lisa gives Amy a half smile. She exits. Amy sits alone in the office. She looks down at her desk and screams at the sight of a mouse. She takes a breath but then picks up her waste paper basket and vomits into it. Blackout.)

ACT 2
Scene 6

(The office becomes the Main Stage. The theatre audience becomes the audience for the concert. Amy and Judith stand at the wings.)

JUDITH

How was that?

AMY

The most stressful hour of my life.

JUDITH

Any double sales?

AMY

You see where Bill and Cindy Quark are sitting? Well, they thought they had seats in the front row because, well, they bought seats in the front. They got Betty Crisp's seats because she returned them to the Box office because she couldn't come anymore. Trouble is, Betty forgot that she had actually returned her tickets. She didn't rip them up when she returned them. So, she showed up with the Quark's tickets. It was stressful.

JUDITH

So Betty has her old seats and the Quarks are sitting in...?

AMY

No-shows.

JUDITH

What a miracle.

AMY

That's a full house. Are you making an announcement about the program change?

JUDITH

I still don't know what I'm going to say. I can't tell them the truth.

AMY

I don't envy you.

JUDITH

I'd take a mountain of double-booked seats over this.

AMY

Where is Nick?

JUDITH

Not here yet. I hope he doesn't come so we can just save ourselves the humiliation.

AMY

Maybe he's passed out somewhere.

JUDITH

I wouldn't put it by him.

(Nick enters, in tails. His hair is smoothed back. He takes a swig from his flask.)

Nevermind. There's his highness now. Okay, time to convince eight hundred people to not ask for their money back. Like we even still have it to give back.

(As Judith is about to step on stage, James appears next to Nick, in tails as well)

Is that James?

AMY

Where?

JUDITH

It is him. What the hell does he think he's doing? He can't sing. Wait here.

AMY

But Judith, you need to introduce...

(Judith walks across the stage to the other wing. Amy follows her. The lights dim. Amy is caught in the spotlight. Nick smooths James's collar. Judith intercepts him. She's about to scream at Nick and James when she notices Amy alone on stage. The house is unbearably silent. Amy is a deer in the headlights)

Hello everyone.

(She looks to Judith in the wings who urges her to say something)

Welcome to the Festival on the Grand's opening night.

(She chokes on her words)

We've had a slight change in program. Katrina Pierce Grossman wasn't able to make it to Gambrel this season. But, in her place, we have our Artistic Director Nick Noble conducting the Gambrel Classical Singers and the Grand Symphony in Berlioz's Requiem.

(Pause. Silence.)

JUDITH

(in a harsh whisper)

The sponsors! Thank the sponsors!

AMY

We'd also like to thank tonight's sponsor, who are listed in your programme. Please can we give them a round of applause?

(Nick waltzes on stage, soaking in the applause that isn't for him. Judith tries to grab James's jacket but he brushes her off and follows Nick on stage. Amy scurries off stage, completely flustered.)

NICK

Welcome! Welcome!

(He's obviously tipsy. Judith puts her head in her hand)

I would like to welcome you all to the Festival's 40th anniversary season! What a night for a little Berlioz. Shall we get on with it?

(Nick turns his back to the audience and poises himself to conduct. James stands at the ready, his folder upright. The Berlioz Requiem plays out of the old CD player. Nick begins to conduct the piece. Amy runs to the other side of the stage to Judith)

AMY

I'm so sorry. I didn't know what to say.

JUDITH

James is singing, Amy. Fuck! What is James doing up there?

AMY

Nick got to him, I guess.

JUDITH

This isn't what it was supposed to be.

AMY

James knows tonight had to go perfectly.

(The orchestra mellows for the bass solo. Nick wobbles on his feet as he turns to James. James begins to sing. His deep, baritone voice echoes into the Main. Just as James starts to sing, Lisa enters into the far wing, tears streaming down her face. She crosses to the other side of the stage to Judith and Amy. Their voices aren't heard but Lisa tells them that Poppy has died. Judith embraces Lisa, they both weep. Amy looks out at the concert, tears streaming down her face. James continues to sing. The lights slowly dim on the concert. Blackout.)

ACT 2
Scene 7

(Night at the office. James bursts into the office. Nick is close behind him.)

JAMES

(laughing loudly)

Ah ha! Jesus, what a fucking thrill. Did you hear that...did you hear that?

NICK

I told you, James. I told you. A fucking phoenix from the ashes.

JAMES

I don't even care. I don't care that Judith is going to skin me alive. Ha! And Poppy...I'm never going to hear the end of it.

NICK

Fuck 'em all! This is our night, James.

JAMES

I don't remember it feeling this good. Did it always feel this good?

NICK

James, it can always feel this good.

JAMES

Are you kidding me? I'm not going to live to see tomorrow let alone sing again. I just told you that Judith's going to have a cow.

(Amy approaches the office. She looks stunned. Her tears have dried. She goes to enter the office when she hears Nick and James talking inside. She stays and listens)

Fuck! I feel incredible. My voice...it just burst out of me. I don't remember it being that amazing.

NICK

James...stop being such a cocky shit.

JAMES

I killed it!

(He starts to sing a piece of his solo)

NICK

James! Fuck, you've giving me a headache. I'm trying to tell you something.

(James keeps on singing and laughing)

I've made a decision, James.

JAMES

Quit 'harshing my buzz.'

NICK

I'm going to the Board in the morning, James.

JAMES

Why?

NICK

They've seen what a triumph tonight was.

JAMES

And a triumph it was...

(He takes a breath to sing again)

NICK

Which means that Judith has to go.

(James stops singing. Amy's eyes widen)

I've decided. She has to go.

JAMES

You don't have the authority to fire her.

NICK

The Board does. She was going to bring in that Katrina woman. For my Berlioz! She has no idea what this place could be if she'd just let me—

JAMES

Wait a second, I thought I was saving your ass tonight. You weren't even going to show to your own rehearsal a few hours ago.

NICK

Even the best get some stage fright.

(James looks bewildered)

You said so yourself. She will never let you keep singing and, look at you, you're on top of the world.

JAMES

Don't make this about me.

NICK

You're right, it's about Judith.

JAMES

Wait, no. I'm not going to be your excuse to fire her.

NICK

Like you said, I don't have the authority to fire her. I'm just going to inform the Board of how she splurges on superfluous performers to fulfill her own agenda. And, if that doesn't work, I'll lay out an ultimatum.

JAMES

Who's to say that even if Judith isn't here that I'm going to sing for you?

NICK

Because it's this

(He refers to the office)

Or that

(He pokes James's chest)

JAMES

Nick, this isn't right—

NICK

Look, do you want Judith to end up like Poppy? Cancer stricken? She's on the cusp of a divorce. She's a ticking time bomb.

JAMES

This isn't right.

NICK

Look, let's not worry about this now. We should celebrate your return to the land of the living!

(Nick goes into the back of the office. Amy backs away from the door but trips down the stairs. She winces. James, hearing something at the door, goes to it and swings it open. He's face to face with Amy. Tears start to stream down her face again. James knows what she's come to say.)

NICK

(calling from the back)

I knew we'd need something to help celebrate! I've been saving this little beauty for a night like this.

(James looks back at the office, then back at Amy. Nick emerges from the back with a bottle of champagne. He sees Amy standing in the doorway.)

JAMES

(turning to Nick)

Nick, Poppy's gone.

NICK

How tragic. How very tragic, indeed. And on such a wonderful night for the Festival.

(Nick pops the cork of the champagne. Amy is incredulous. James looks back at Nick. Nick offers him a glass.)

NICK

To Poppy.

AMY

(explosive)

Don't you see that a woman has DIED?! She's gone and you're...

(pointing to the champagne)

...celebrating. You're celebrating.

(She turns and exits)

JAMES

Amy, wait...

NICK

Let her go. This night is about you, James. Let her go.

(He offers the glass of champagne. Blackout.)

ACT 2
Scene 8

(Judith enters the office and gets it ready: lights on, coffee pot on, OPEN sign flipped. She straightens one of the Festival posters (a different one than the opening scene), which had become askew in the night. Poppy's desk is covered with flowers. Amy enters.)

JUDITH

Thank God you're here Amy, the phones have been ringing off the hook. Look at the review.

(She drops a newspaper on Amy's desk)

AMY

A triumph?

JUDITH

A triumph.

AMY

(reading)

'Nick Noble gets better with age, like a good cheese?' Who wrote this?

JUDITH

Probably Nick himself.

AMY

Are you joking?

JUDITH

Partly. I won't lie. I'm a little relieved. Well, I'm furious with Nick, and James for that matter but, I still can't help feel a little relieved. I seriously thought I'd be finding a new job this morning.

AMY

(aside)

Maybe I heard them wrong. Maybe I imagined it. How could they do that? First Pop and now her? Then again, if it's true, I have to tell her.

(Scene resumes)

Judith, I have to tell you—

(The phone rings. She answers it.)

Good Morning, The Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking. Well, we're very glad you enjoyed it. Yes, James is a fantastic singer.

(She looks over to Judith. Judith rolls her eyes)

Yes, how many would you like?

(The phone rings. Judith picks it up)

JUDITH

Good Morning, The Festival on the Grand, Judith speaking. Now? I can't possibly come across town now. We have three concerts today. Well, the Board will have to wait. It's just not possible today. Nick isn't free today either! He performs at the two and the eight. I'm sorry Clark, I have to let you go. Busy day ahead.

AMY

Okay, they'll be waiting for you at the Studio at four o'clock. Bye now.
(Judith and Amy both hang up at the same time. Amy inhales to speak)

JUDITH

Where is Lisa? I know we're all deeply upset about Poppy but we really need to get a move on here. Poppy would want us to forge ahead!

AMY

Judith.

JUDITH

What is it? Hurry, before the next phone rings.

AMY

Do you think the Festival killed Poppy?

(aside)

They were performing while she was dying. They were celebrating. Don't they realize a woman has died?

(Judith pauses)

JUDITH

Is that what you think?

AMY

I dunno.

JUDITH

I think Poppy loved the Festival more than anything. I think cancer killed Pop.

AMY

(aside)

There are little bits of plastic in the ocean that get trapped in whirlpools and accumulate to make a floating island the size of Texas. It must have taken a lot of plastic to make her cancer. They said the exhaustion killed her; swimming against the current must be tiring.

(Scene resumes)

AMY

But, if you knew it was going to hurt her, would you have told her to quit?

(Pause. Judith considers Amy's question)

JUDITH

I would have let her work.

AMY

Even if...

JUDITH

Yes. Even if this was in the cards. There are some things in life we just can't control. Poppy knew that more than anyone.

AMY

Judith—

(The phone rings. Amy lets it ring a couple times)

JUDITH

Is there something else bothering you Amy?

AMY

(Beat)

I'm glad Poppy was around to see you as General Manager.

JUDITH

I'm glad she was too.

AMY

I'm going to answer the phone now.

JUDITH

If it's Nick, tell him I'm not here.

(Judith gets up to go into her office. She takes a second to look at her name on her office door. She looks back at Amy, then at Poppy's desk.)

AMY

Good Morning, the Festival on the Grand, Amy speaking.

(Amy looks over at Judith. They share a smile. Blackout.)

FINIS

AFTERWORD

Introduction

In Western society, “post-feminism” means that feminism is over. *Tempo* explores and critiques the post-feminist world we live in. It does so by drawing the audience into the post-feminist landscape of The Festival on the Grand and encouraging it to be critical of an established “Truth” in Western culture: the battle for gender equality has been won. The play does not claim to have the tools to dismantle patriarchy; rather, it attempts to ignite change by exposing the pressing need for feminism in a realist play. My concern is that the myth of “post-feminism” has entrenched gender roles deeper into ideology, making the oppression of women an “acceptable [and] inescapable” (Diamond 79) aspect of human society. *Tempo* makes visible the mandatory gender norms essential to a thriving post-feminism and challenges the masculine hegemony that so many women accept.

This paper accompanies the original script of *Tempo* and serves four main purposes: First, this paper is a personal reflection. It describes some of the choices I made in this thesis project as well as the process of developing, writing and workshopping the script. I also outline a brief history of feminism and the definition and implications of post-feminism. Next, I explore how realist theatre can be a useful tool for social change. Finally, I analyze a few key components of *Tempo*, namely the relationships between the characters and some pivotal dramaturgical decisions. I hope that the play, as well as this afterword, encourages the audience of *Tempo* to cast off the “post” and rethink feminism in modern, creative and useful ways. I am certain that theatre can awaken women from this post-feminist stupor and illuminate that, while feminism is fraught with nuances, contradictions, and complexities, it retains an urgency and relevancy.

Why Post-Feminism? Why Theatre?

I am a feminist who is deeply disturbed by the backlash against feminism that I encounter from other women of my social background. Specifically, I am overwhelmed by the number of young women I meet who choose not to self-define as feminists. It is important to specify that most of these young women are not rejecting feminism as an inadequate term to describe their resistance to male hegemony. On the contrary, for the most part, young women are casting off feminism without creating an alternative way to combat rigid gender roles. My concerns are not unique; in fact, they are widespread enough to be considered in the mainstream media. On November 12, 2011 the popular CBC television program DocZone dedicated an episode to feminism titled, “The F Word: Who Wants to be a Feminist?” The program focused on the main issue surrounding feminism: the fact that it has been buried alive. The documentary highlighted the vast number of young women who deem feminism obsolete and choose not to take up the torch from second-wave feminists. Mysteriously, women are flocking away from feminism despite its importance. Since beginning my undergraduate degree, I have been compelled to explore the reason behind feminism’s newfound obsolescence and question why more women are not concerned about the future of feminism in the hostile environment of post-feminism.

As a scholar with an undergraduate degree in Media Studies, my initial response is to locate the roots of this backlash in the media. Perhaps this fear of feminism stems from the unceasing misrepresentation of feminists in the media. In our media-saturated environment, young women are continually faced with, as Heywood and Drake describe, “the feminazi” (4). This hyperbolic image of a ball-busting, man-hating feminist can be uncanny for young women: while they relate to the desire for gender equality, the repellent, alien “feminist” has

the potential to deter women from feminism altogether. Indeed, many young women *are* feminists but, because they do not want to be associated with society's dominant image of the feminist, they choose to say "'feminist' things prefaced by 'I'm not a feminist, but...'" (Heywood and Drake 4). This kind of "no, but...feminism" (Hall and Rodriguez 883) showcases that feminism as a political tool has been dwarfed by negative stereotypes in the media.

However, media representations of feminists are only one facet of a much deeper problem. Rather than identify as a feminist, the modern, young woman often chooses to resist labels entirely. Therefore, feminism seems to have been replaced by a capitalist (albeit patriarchal) individualism: "young women have moved toward a greater individualism and away from identity politics, disliking labels and seeing no need to organize..." (Reinelt 19). While a label-free identity might be appealing to some young women, pegging it as a benign trend that affects all labels equally is misleading. As Rowe-Finkbeiner highlights, "the labels that define sexuality and 'feminist' grated the most [on young women]"(5-6). It becomes clear that not all labels are resisted equally. Why does the "feminist" label irk women so much? Where does this backlash come from? According to Coppock, Haydon and Richter, "[in the 1990s] once sex discrimination/equal pay legislation was in place and 'equal opportunities' policies were adopted by government agencies and influential corporations, a new 'post-feminist' dawn could be celebrated" (4). Perhaps young women truly believe "equality has already been achieved" because women can vote, own property, and, according to legislation, receive equal pay (Scott 22). However, while post-feminism was lauded as the celebration of the end of feminism, in actuality, it was a premature dirge for a much-needed sociopolitical movement. Even in 2012, in most of the West, the sun still rises on patriarchy.

Therefore, the key to understanding why so many young women resist feminist identity politics must lie in our post-feminist era. They are deterred by more than just negative media misrepresentations; in fact, the feminist has been negatively represented in the media since the suffrage movement. Today, post-feminism sends a matrix of confusing messages to young women that lead women to the conclusion that they do not have to identify as feminists. Namely, women are confused by two conflicting messages: according to dominant ideology, women and men are equal; however, in reality, not only does the oppression of women still exist, it is alarmingly tolerated under a post-feminist paradigm. Society has accepted gender difference as normal, therefore allowing gender inequality to further entrench itself in our ideology. Post-feminism suggests that, while things may not be perfect for women, our current gender dynamic is as good as it can get. Therefore, feminism is outdated for two contradictory reasons: on the one hand, feminists of the past were “successful” in securing some rights for today’s women; therefore women do not need to continue the fight for women’s rights. On the other hand, if feminists of the first and second waves were not able to completely overhaul patriarchy, it must be impossible to uproot. Thus, feminism is not needed anymore because it has failed. Both of these messages are perpetuated by post-feminism: they sooth and discourage at the same time, making feminist pursuits seem futile. Therefore, feminism remains in a disturbing stasis, evident in the fact that so many young women today make it clear that they are *not* feminists.

I have chosen to explore post-feminism through theatre for a variety of reasons. First, this thesis project is concerned with how post-feminism contributes to reinforcing gender roles in our ideology. Since I am trying to make visible or expose existing gender norms as post-feminist constructs, the medium of theatre is the most pertinent course of action. Theatre

has a long practical and theoretical history of unearthing invisible “inevitables” in our society. As Althusser argues, “ideology naturalizes its ideas, presenting them not as constructions of reality but as obvious and common sense” (Counsel and Wolf 43). Theatre practitioners use many tactics in order to awaken an audience from common sense. Most canonical is Bertolt Brecht’s use of the A-effect to make something normal seem “striking, something that calls for explanation” (Brecht 47). By distancing the audience and encouraging them to think about theatre critically, Brechtian theatre exposes the way things are and “mak[es them] worthy of notice” (Brecht 48). Jill Dolan suggests that the Brechtian *gestus* is the avenue through which actors and spectators experience, what she calls, “utopic performatives” which “crystallize social relations and offer them to spectators for critical contemplation” (7). Given its history, theatre can uproot ideologies, and as Dolan puts it, has the potential to “persuade us that beyond this ‘now’ of material oppression and unequal power relations lives a future that might be different, one whose potential we can feel as we’re seared by the promise of a present that gestures toward a better later” (7). Discussing post-feminism in the theatre creates the potential for an audience to imagine “a better later” and create new and exciting paths for feminist action.

I also chose the medium of theatre because I want my concerns with post-feminism to be considered by the public, not just the academy. Post-feminism is potent outside of the university. By doing a creative thesis, specifically an original play, I am able to use theatre to illuminate the issues inherent in post-feminism in the most accessible way for an audience. Further, theatre allows me to argue that “post-feminism” is patriarchy in disguise; post-feminism is a façade that has convinced women that feminism deserves no attention, revival, or reflection. Returning to my Media Studies roots, I’m reminded of Marshall McLuhan’s

iconic conclusion “the medium is the message”; theatre’s tradition of playing, pretending, and acting, helps me prove that post-feminism is, undoubtedly, patriarchy at work. Finally, much of this project has been about processing and communicating personal experience.

According to Elaine Aston’s Feminist Theatre Practice: A Handbook, the merit of experience is made possible through theatre: “this allows you [the writer] the possibility of self-defining feminism through an exploration of what is individually and collectively oppressive to you as a young woman” (172). Therefore, theatre, with its rich history of conveying personal experience, is an effective vehicle to deliver a personal, feminist message.

Tracing Feminism and Defining the “Post”

In order to highlight the implications of post-feminism, it is apt to briefly define the three feminist waves. While the image of “waves” discouragingly suggests that feminism will cease to be a constant force upon male-dominated society, it is a useful way to illustrate defining moments in feminism’s history. Each “wave” of feminism is distinct. First-wave feminism, or liberal feminism, is best known for trying to elevate the position of women to that of men without dismantling the status quo: “the ‘first wave’ was dominated by an ‘equal rights’ feminism derived from the politics of liberalism” (Coppock, Haydon, and Richter 11). With its roots in Mary Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792) and, later, the suffrage movement, first-wave feminism was keen to show male-dominated society that women and men were alike and, therefore, women should also be included in political, educational and social enterprise.

After World War II, many women who enjoyed participating in the workforce during the war were forced back into the domestic space, “the ‘woman behind the man behind the gun’ soon became the ‘woman behind the man behind the job’” (Coppock, Haydon, and

Richter 12). Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique (1963) ignited second-wave feminism, which focused on making political the private lives of women. The second-wave embraced diversity and aimed to dismantle the patriarchal systems that their first-wave sisters tolerated. Second-wave feminism is also characterized by being heavily theory-based and gave rise to popular feminist theorists like Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, and Germaine Greer.

In the 1980s and 1990s, third-wave feminism started to break on the shore. Focused on blurring gender boundaries and celebrating difference, third-wave feminism is characterized by a mixture of feminism and anti-feminism. In the shadow of the second-wave, which tackled some major issues like abortion, sexual harassment, and violence against women, many third-wave feminists are unsupported because "the battle has been won." This sentiment ushers in post-feminism, a supposedly celebratory period of sexual equality. Feminism, it would appear, came and went in under two hundred years; however, despite popular discourse, it is clear that there is more to do.

"Post-feminism" can refer to post-modern, difference-based third-wave feminism as well as the "backlash against feminism of international significance" (Coppock, Haydon and Richter 3). Therefore, "post-feminism" is a convoluted term because, for some feminist scholars, it benignly describes the emergence of third-wave sentiments in feminist theory, while for others, it signifies the death of feminism. For example, Sophia Phoca and Rebecca Wright's Introducing Postfeminism, one of a series of Introducing books that offer an "in a nutshell" description of a given topic, begins with the line, "Postfeminism does not mean feminism is over. It signifies a shift in feminist theory" (3). More specifically, Phoca and Wright claim that "postfeminism" is the shift from feminism's fight for equality to the

celebration of difference. However, as Misha Kavka describes, many feminists rejected the term “post-feminist” to describe feminist action:

The term was originally coined in 1985 by Toril Moi in *Sexual/Textual Politics* to advocate a feminism that would deconstruct the binary between equality-based...feminism and difference-based...feminism...In my own memory, however, the appearance of ‘postfeminism’ has a much different source: I recall a sticker...that read ‘I’LL BE A POSTFEMINIST IN A POSTPATRIARCHY.’ The difference between the two uses is instructive. (29)

While I acknowledge the differing definitions of post-feminism, for the purposes of this paper, I will use the term to describe the unsettling state of “after-feminism” that our society finds itself in. Post-feminism communicates the message that feminism is complete, obsolete, and extraneous. On occasion, I will use the term in quotation marks to emphasize that the term has been prematurely applied to our society and should not be taken for granted. Further, the quotation marks ostend post-feminism as the mask that patriarchy wears to discourage and hinder feminist progress; in other words, patriarchy performs post-feminism. According to Janelle Reinelt, who is also critical of post-feminism: “there is something performatively defeatist about using the designation ‘postfeminism’ —defeatist in that it seems to give up on the project of feminism, and performative in that it actively constructs the present based on a sense of feminism as past or over” (Reinelt 17). I do not want to perpetuate the myth of post-feminism by using the term; on the contrary, I hope that exploring the implications of post-feminism through theatre will draw attention to the problematic ubiquity of post-feminist sentiments in our culture. While I acknowledge the existence of third-wave feminism, my experience has shown me that feminism-at-large has become unnecessary and taboo, especially for young women of my social background. Unfortunately, because many young women do not embrace feminism it “has become, or soon will be, extinct” (Hawkesworth 965).

It is important for me to also define “feminism” because the term carries with it a plethora of definitions and implications. Throughout this project, I have been careful to acknowledge that there is not a singular feminism. My feminism is based on my social and cultural position and therefore, will most certainly differ from my neighbour’s feminism. My race and class influence my feminism: as a second-generation Canadian of Welsh and British heritage who is white, had a middleclass upbringing, and a fruitful education, I am aware of my privilege. Alisa Palmer articulates the current third-wave understanding of feminism of which I tend to agree; “women have disagreement as to what feminism is, what power for women is, and what equality for women is. But for these disagreements to be stifled in an attempt to present a unified feminist front is dangerous” (Scott 164). However, on the other hand, it is equally important to allow feminism to retain unity:

Women individually and collectively experience oppression quite differently and from quite different sources. Class divisions do matter, as does cultural difference and racism. Women who step outside the parameters of compulsory heterosexuality not only suffer personally for their sexuality but also institutionally...while recognizing the importance of guarding against ‘false universalism’...it is equally important not to lose sight of common aims because of the diversity and complexity of the struggle. (Coppock, Haydon, and Richter 43)

As Palmer, and Coppock, Haydon, and Richter suggest, feminism becomes feminisms when the experience of being a woman intersects with other social and cultural aspects like class, race, gender, and sexual orientation. Therefore, feminism (broadly speaking) needs to strike a balance between diversity and unity. In my exploration of post-feminism, I have found it most useful to focus on my personal relationship with feminism rather than which feminist category I fit. For me, feminism means paying attention to the experiences and stories of women, which is precisely the aim of *Tempo*: “for if the claims of ‘post-feminism’ are to be substantiated it has to be in the lives of contemporary women and their daily personal,

ideological and institutional experiences and encounters” (Coppock, Haydon and Richter 8). *Tempo* aims to show women that feminism can be an accessible and useful tool to help them comprehend their seemingly unrelated daily struggles.

Methodology: Developing *Tempo*

Tempo began with a desire to depict a modern workplace in order to encourage an audience to be aware and critical of a post-feminist paradigm at work. Specifically, I wanted to explore the disappearance of feminism outside the academy. My experience has shown me that feminism thrives in the academy, especially in the humanities and social sciences; however, outside of it, feminism has lost momentum. In *Tempo*, the women who work in the Festival office have trouble accessing or even recognizing feminism as a useful tool to help them understand their daily lives. *Tempo* depicts a world in which The Feminine Mystique has returned; women are disillusioned and frustrated with their lives but do not have a way to explain it:

The construction of ‘post-feminism’ has led to, and emphasized, differences between women. It has also directed the focus away from the real advances, such as increased appreciation of diversity and experience, and shared frustration and disillusionment leading to collective resistance. Instead, women are blamed, or blame themselves and one another, for their feelings of dissatisfaction and the underlying causes remain ignored or refuted. (Coppock, Haydon, and Richter 8)

In developing the script, I wanted to explore how an unchecked patriarchy and post-feminism have ceased to make feminism a viable way for women to understand these “underlying causes.” Further, I also wanted the script to be a piece of digestible feminism that could help women see the caveats in the dominant “feminism is over” discourse. I fear that, without theatre that helps women explore the intersections between their everyday experiences and male hegemony, feminism will only manifest itself as a historical figment. In the play, this fear has become a reality; the disillusionment of the “post” thrives, leaving women few

options except to believe their situation as inevitable, normal, and acceptable. In *Tempo*, the battle has been “won” but, in reality, women’s inequality has disappeared not because of widespread success but because it has been absorbed into ideology as an inevitable fact of life. *Tempo* is a portion of palatable feminism that bursts out of the academic realm, leaves the feminist jargon in the lecture hall and ignites the stage, giving women¹ a chance to make sense of their daily lives by relating to the characters.

Procedure: Writing *Tempo*

The script took four months to complete. By working closely with Judith Thompson, the script has been drafted six times. The most significant dramaturgical changes to the script occurred after the first draft (February) and after the two-day workshop of the script (April), which I will later discuss in detail.

Throughout the writing process, I struggled with how to best convey a feminist message. My research assured me that “feminist theatre” does not always have to contain a prescriptive feminist message. Gayle Austin asserts in the opening of *Feminist Theories for Dramatic Criticism* that “a feminist approach to anything means paying attention to women” (Austin 1). Therefore, I was confident that, as long as I was paying attention to my female characters, I would be opening up space for feminist discourse.

I also wanted to ensure that the play was not just feminist in its content, but also in form and inspiration. The realist form of the play allows *Tempo* to be feminist. According to Damian Grant, realist writers abandoned the Classical tradition of writing about society’s elite and, rather, focused on the seemingly small existence of the everyday person (32). More broadly, “the new art” privileges “the crowd over the hero” and therefore “would democratic

¹ Albeit women who can afford and access the theatre

not offer an adequate definition?” (Grant 32). The democratic nature of realism directly relates to feminist theatre practice, which is often associated with collective creation for the same reason. Therefore, while *Tempo* may not tout an overt feminist message, the play is inherently feminist in its content and form.

Tempo is also feminist because of its muse. I have worked at a small-town arts festival that upholds a dysfunctional patriarchy at the expense of female employees. Given the inspiration for the story, the play is feminist because it is infused with my experience of being a woman in the workforce. As Aston demands, “we need to find ways of taking...women’s life stories seriously, as a subject for theatre-making and academic study” (Aston 170). *Tempo* tries to do precisely what Aston describes; the play takes my own experiences and the experiences of the female characters very seriously. In addition, using the play as the focal point of an academic study elevates the position of the play as well as the female experiences within it. The academy has a tradition of, as Aston describes, “driv[ing] us away from ourselves” (Aston handbook 171) and disregarding women’s experiences as not intellectual. Yet, luckily, many feminist scholars are challenging this tendency by writing from their own experiences. However, elevating *Tempo* did not come without its discomforts: for women “to think of ourselves as a (feminist) subject for theatre studies alongside Shakespeare, Miller, or Brecht seems incongruous” (Aston 170). This incongruity; however, is a remnant of patriarchal expectation. Rather than succumb to it, *Tempo* boldly resists the patriarchal canon by sidestepping the male “greats” and focusing on one woman’s observations.

Obstacles: Writing Challenges

Writing the script, I inevitably faced many challenges. One significant obstacle I faced when writing was how to write what is “true” about a small-town arts organization as well as maintain the dignity of the real organization that inspired this story. At the beginning of the project, writing *Tempo* was an exercise in discretion. While most of the events in the script are fabrications, the essence of the real place remains. Namely, I have purposefully retained some true moments of systemic oppression toward women that might be recognizable to those familiar with the local arts scene. As a young writer, I deeply struggled with how to expose a patriarchy at work, but also not damage the reputation of the festival for which I worked or other arts organizations like it.

It was only a matter of time before my ability to keep the topic of *Tempo* quiet failed; however, I benefitted from talking to people about the script. Most significantly, it became glaringly clear that there was a gendered divide between those who supported the topic of my play and those who feared it. Many women whom I talked to about *Tempo* were elated that a sliver of their experience would be represented on stage, or, in the least, validated by being recognized and written down. A few men, on the other hand, who heard about *Tempo* were obviously worried, despite the fact that the ill treatment of women is not a secret; on the contrary, it is notorious. To address the misogyny that occurs at the organization for which I worked is not to expose it, but rather, to make public what is *constantly* discussed privately between women who are associated with the organization. *Tempo* draws countless conversations onto the stage, thereby giving women voice in the public sphere. In other words, *Tempo* protests keeping up appearances: the play wipes away the veneer of “equality” to show that gender equality is far from achieved. The play is my struggle with the

unrelenting presence of patriarchy in the arts and, more so, the invisibility of it to those outside of the arts world. As a writer, I had to come to terms with the fact that the world I was conveying was recognizable. To ensure that the script retained authenticity and that I matured as a writer, this was a risk I was eager to take.

Another significant challenge of writing the script was to convey a story that has a clear feminist message without being strident. During the writing process, I would sometimes find myself elevating a feminist message; other times I altered the script to be less prescriptive. As a completed script, the play is not as much touting feminism as an appealing identity politic as it is mourning how quickly and easily feminism has been dismissed, a trend that is characteristic of current feminism as a whole:

Previously, it was feminism's task to make visible the violence done to women...it is now the damage done to feminism that is being exposed: revealing the contemporary myths of girl power...and, overall, the consequent alienation of feminism from the future generations of women with whom it had hoped to connect. (Aston 85)

Despite the fact that *Tempo* mourns feminism more than it prescribes it, I feared alienating my audience with a hard-hitting “feminazi” play, particularly, the women I wanted to make aware of the implications of embracing post-feminism. I was also adamant on writing a play that did not exclude or blame men. Therefore, I chose to write a realist, ensemble dramatic comedy with male and female characters to encourage a mixed-gender audience. However, *Tempo*'s realism achieves more than ushering both men and women into the theatre. The realist, or socialist realist, form of the play has the power to draw the audience into the story and, consequently, prompt social change. Damian Grant suggests that socialist realist literature or critical realism is “a depiction of contemporary reality which is not aloof and neutral...but informed by some moral belief...socialist realism is wholly political” (76). The

realist elements in *Tempo*: the narrative, comic, poetic, human and melancholic moments are not politically “aloof”. *Tempo* appears benign on the surface: “[the play] takes men [and women] under ordinary conditions, shows characters in the course of their everyday existence, average and changing” (Grant 32). While many moments in *Tempo* seem apart from the piece’s feminism, they are, in fact, helping the audience enter a world in which political concerns are bubbling at the surface.

While any piece of literature can be socialist realist, socialist realist *theatre*, can be particularly effective. In her discussion of utopia in performance, Jill Dolan asserts that “being passionately and profoundly stirred in performance can be a transformation experience useful in other realms of social life” (15). By portraying an audience’s struggles, fears, and anxieties, a play can have an incredible impact on an audience and therefore penetrate “social life” outside of the theatre. However, this impact can be lessened by confusing, abstract or accusatory theatre. A realist play, on the other hand, engages the audience, thereby increasing the chances of an audience considering, embracing, and realizing embedded political sentiments: “briefly transcendent bits of profound human feeling and connection, spring from alchemy between performers and spectators and their mutual confrontation with a historical present that lets them imagine a different, putatively better future” (Dolan 168). *Tempo* is ultimately pointing to the possibility of a new reality, one in which feminism could succeed. The play’s realism invites a diverse audience and therefore, increases the chances of creating “alchemy.”

It is important to note that many feminist theatre practitioners fear that realism, “which attempt[s] to fix the ‘normal’ and ‘familiar’ in the interests of social stability and the *status quo*” reinforces dominant ideology (Aston handbook 104). However, as I have

suggested, there are noteworthy possibilities that realism affords, especially in the shadow of second-wave feminism and the hostility of post-feminism. Rather than avoid realism because of its patriarchal roots, feminist playwrights can use realism to challenge existing structures and withstand further backlash against feminism.

Testing: Workshopping *Tempo*

For two evenings in April, I held a workshop at The University of Guelph to give three-dimensionality to an early draft of *Tempo*. Six volunteer actors from the Guelph/Kitchener/Waterloo/Toronto community participated in the workshop: Krysti Allison (Amy), Jane Marie Watson (Judith), John Watson (James), Abigail Slinger (Poppy), Emma Barr (Lisa), and David Newman (Nick). On the first evening, the actors did a cold reading of the script after which I facilitated an hour-long discussion about it. On the second evening, I started by asking the actors to read some significant changes I had made to the script; we then did another, more animated read through for a small audience and a subsequent talkback. Workshopping the script was incredibly fruitful; hearing and seeing the actors engage with the characters and dialogue brought to light significant flaws in the script. After the workshop, I was able to improve many aspects of *Tempo*, including integrating monologues; defining character relationships; differentiating *how* each character spoke and basic continuity.

There were a few significant moments from the workshop that I would like to highlight. Most crucially, it was in the workshop that I learned how to convey a feminist message effectively. Hearing the play for the first time, I was concerned that I had integrated my concerns with post-feminism too subtly. However, it came to light in the first talkback that I was often too hard-hitting with sweeping feminist sentiments. For example, in the first

workshop draft, Amy's character transformed too quickly from a naïve, young summer student to a feminist freedomfighter. This was a pivotal moment for the script; soon after I began to consider how the play conveyed "feminism" without relying on an overt feminist speech or dialogue. I also began to consider the absence of overt feminism to be an asset to the script; the invisibility of feminism points to a disturbing post-feminist landscape.

On the same note, I discovered in the first talkback that I was trying too hard to write a serious, dramatic play when, in fact, I could include some comedic elements without jeopardizing the sobering message of the play. This realization allowed me to incorporate more comic details into the script that bring *The Festival on the Grand* to life, which I had previously excluded because I was writing a drama.

I also discovered in the workshop that I had written Nick as a two-dimensional antagonist rather than a stand-alone character. As a result, the feminist struggle in the script was being blamed on the failings of one man, rather than on a complicated patriarchal structure. I wanted to ensure that I was not reducing women's oppression to a single factor. While I did not want the audience to sympathize with Nick, I did want them to understand him and therefore made some significant changes to his character in subsequent drafts. Namely, I was able to improve the script by providing more reasons for his hubris and narcissism.

In the workshop, I also was able to think theatrically for the first time since beginning this thesis project. In her *Feminist Theatre Practice: A Handbook*, Elaine Aston encourages this from the onset: "remember to keep thinking theatrically. Try not to think of your feminist research as an academic task that you have to get out of the way before you can get on with the business of performance" (30). Throughout this process, I have been aware that the play I

created needed to have academic integrity. Unfortunately, more often than not, this notion was a creative hurdle. This concern was lessened as a result of the workshop process. I was able to escape the constraints of the academy and think about what was working in the play, not what components were interesting to theorize.

Overall, the workshop allowed me to merge theory and practice, something that is essential in thorough theatre studies. In her Introduction to Staging Femininities, Geraldine Harris discusses the difficulties merging theory and practice; however, she does recognize that incorporating theory and practice is often a useful endeavour: “while the perceived ‘gap’ between theory and practice is at times a locus of difficulty, it is also a potentially productive space” (2). Further, Harris suggests that, interchangeability between theatre theory and practice is essential; without crossing over from theory to practice, academics run the risks of “hopelessly” intellectualizing and prescribing impractical theatrical tactics in the face of a production (Harris 1). The workshop afforded me the opportunity briefly to practice democratic, feminist theatre, something I had only experienced in the classroom. I took the workshop as an occasion to be critical of the entire process I had taken in creating the script, specifically now that I was inviting other theatre practitioners into the *Tempo* process. Most significantly, I focused on avoiding a hierarchical structure in the workshop space. Honest feedback was integral to the workshop so I tried to create an open environment in which each person could share his or her thoughts on the script.

Analysis: Dramaturgical Decisions

The final draft of *Tempo* is drastically different from the script that was originally workshopped in early April. Likewise, it includes very little of the original first draft that I finished in mid-February. I would like to touch on two major differences between the script

pre-workshop and the final draft. First, I will address a significant change in Amy's character. Second, I will address why I revised the script so that it is Poppy who falls ill at the end of Act One and dies later in Act Two rather than Judith.

In the pre-workshop draft of the script, Amy found feminism at the end of play while, in the final draft, Amy's political feelings are not as clear. The setting of the Festival allowed me to juxtapose generations that might never have crossed in another environment, thus allowing different versions of feminism to grate up against one another in a space in which feminism has long been absent. At the beginning of the play, Amy, the youngest character, is the most removed from feminism and struggles to understand why her first work experience is unfulfilling and oppressive. I had originally intended for Amy to discover feminism and break free of the post-feminism that surrounds her. However, in the workshop, it became clear that Amy's transformation was too abrupt and strident. Therefore, in the final version, I let the audience decide if Amy will recognize that her experience is a symptom of an unchecked structure, or if she will suffer through the repression that the generations before her have. I hope that, by considering Amy's relationship to feminism, each audience member will also consider his or her own. The play ultimately asks if Amy's future has been predetermined? Will her alienation from feminism set her up for a lifetime of discrimination? In reality, Amy's situation is not fiction. In her study of post-feminism, Pamela Aronson conducted a series of interviews to explore how young women feel about a feminism-free future:

One-third of the women were concerned about future discrimination... For example, Linda, a middle-class white woman...said, "I can see being a woman coming in the way. I work for a company that does still have a little bit of the old boy's club at the upper management." (191)

Tempo asks what young women will do when faced with discrimination in the old boys' club. Will these women accept it as ideological fact or take an active approach and try to challenge it?

In the pre-workshop draft of the script, it is Judith, not Poppy, who falls ill at the end of Act 1. However, after the workshop, I decided to amend this structural aspect of the script. I decided to switch Judith and Poppy for two significant reasons. First, eliminating Judith at the end of Act One removed the theatrical and ideological clash between Judith and Nick. Removing this tension did a disservice to Judith's character as well as the feminist message of the play. I wanted to show that, even Judith, who is a strong woman with feminist leanings, is still subject to the myths post-feminism; she is so consumed in her job and preoccupied with being the "superwoman" (Coppock, Haydon, and Richter 4) that she has trouble mustering the energy to challenge the patriarchy she sees around her, a dilemma I know many women experience.

I also felt that Poppy's death conveyed a more significant message about the abysmal state of feminism. Poppy's death is symbolic; she is the history of the Festival on the Grand, and represents a time when second-wave feminism was stretching its legs. Poppy is the second-wave and we lose her halfway through the play, suggesting that, if women today lose touch with their feminist histories, post-feminism will continue to prevail. Remembering the struggles of the women who came before us reminds us, most crucially, that things *can* change. However, I am not suggesting that women today need to reenact the past but, rather, engage with it: "Feminism has always operated self-reflexively [however]...Feminism is not...something we propose as us needing to 'get back to' (Aston and Harris 3). I mean to suggest that women, especially young women, should not shake off feminism but, rather,

discover how patriarchy operates today and learn how to navigate and change it. Patriarchy, while it is so deeply ingrained in our society, is not our only option.

Conclusion

By writing *Tempo*, I have contributed to a new generation of feminist playwrights who, as Reinelt describes, write plays that “seem to lack the overt marks of explicitly feminist commitment [but] are informed by, and filtered through, the perspectives of women who have been familiar with, and lived in relation to... feminism” (31). I hope the journey I have taken to complete the script will inspire other feminists to consider post-feminism and scrutinize how we can reinvent feminism to suit our contemporary needs as citizens. *Tempo* is just one step to reenergizing feminism and casting off the “post.” Hopefully, in the future, the script will lose some of its topicality because it will have helped to revive feminism from its premature grave and de-stigmatize feminism for young women in Canada.

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