

RED STITCH ACTORS' THEATRE PRESENTS

AN INK WORLD PREMIERE

A SIMPLE ACT OF KINDNESS

BY ROSS MUELLER

23 November - 18 December 2022



CAST

Khisraw Jones-Shukoor Greg
Joe Petruzzi Tony
Sarah Sutherland Julie
Lou Wall Sophia

CREATIVES

Peter Houghton Director
Jacob Battista & Sophie Woodward Set & Costume Design
Amelia Lever-Davidson Lighting Design
David Franzke Sound Design
Sam Diamond Asst. Set/Costume Design

PRODUCTION

David Bowyer Production Manager
Natasha Marich Stage Manager
Douglas Hassack Assistant Stage Manager

THANKS

Giovanna Yate Gonzalez, Lindsay Templeton and MTC.

This play was developed through Red Stitch's INK program.

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WRITERS NOTES

This is the first play I've written for Red Stitch Actors Theatre. It's also the first play I have written over Zoom.

When we started the process, we were living in what we thought was a normal world. We were developing a kooky play about real estate and drilling into the notion that family is a series of transactions. Cynical, I know, right? But real estate is brutal and divisive. So the play was always going to be a hard arse comedy, and then the pandemic arrived. I remember the day at Red Stitch when we were just about to do a reading or we'd just finished, I actually don't know for sure. But we were in the back room at Cromwell Road and the news began to break that the theatre industry was closing down. Going into hibernation.

We were suddenly on the precipice of an enormous cliff. We had no idea how long this would last and we had no idea of what would happen to normality. If the play is about getting into the Market, then it is dealing with contemporary pressures. The pandemic was bringing a sledgehammer of reality. How much reality is too much reality? Will it overwhelm family? Will it steal the thunder of story? Will there be a happy ending or will we all be in lock down forever? We had a decision to make.

Another indistinct distinct memory is the Zoom call when Peter and Ella and I meet to make this decision. The light in the sky is a beautiful pink, the breeze is a whisper. We decided to move ahead and I think the play was scheduled to be performed at the end of 2021 (I think..) Anyway, the development was conducted through lockdowns. A daisy chain of intercity Zooms. A pandemic way to work.

I want to thank Ella and Peter and the whole team of amazing actors at Red Stitch who committed to the realisation of this play. Every time we have been able to get into the same room at the same time, it has been a celebration of community. This is why I write for theatre. I love being in the same room with other people and laughing. I love these characters with all my heart. I know them and I don't know them at all. I love they are not perfect, and I love they continually surprise me with brutality and a capacity to love and endure. Maybe that's the lesson I learned? My life is very different to when this whole thing started. Shaped and shifted by pressures and opportunities of prolonged isolation and escape.

I hope you enjoy this play.
For me, everything has been worth it.
Thank you.

Ross Mueller



DIRECTORS NOTES

I first directed a play by Ross, No Man's Island back in 1997. It was a defining production for me and in many ways I owe a debt to the playwright for my own path since. Ross is a political writer, his view of the world and all the ways in which it could be better infuse his works in sometimes sly and sometimes overt ways. That early work was set in a prison and was embedded in a father son relationship that touched many in the audience in a way that's rarely achieved. Eschewing the easy path of didactic preaching he found a tone and two cyphers for our anxieties around masculinity that touched many in the audience with a gentle and encouraging hand. The play introduced a playwright with heart, intelligence, an excellent ear for dialogue and a highly developed social conscience. Twenty five years later he's written a pure comedy, with many doors, fulsome and hilarious characters, a heavily pregnant situation and all the other stuff that makes a comedy... a comedy!

Truth be told, I do love a comedy. I love the joy and the pain of making a joke work, of making a situation resonate precisely because of it's excruciating familiarity or the total commitment of a character to an absurdity. This play has all that in spades. And of course being Ross, he also has something to say, which elevates the work from the fairy floss lightness of a true farce. The key to great comedy of course is not to skate on stereotype or find obvious fault with institutions but rather, to find fault with ourselves and to laugh at the ways in which we institutionalise our faults. In this play the target is our obsession with real estate, our confusion between the institution of the family home and our endless love of a hard asset. Ross salts this soup with a precarious tightrope walk over a void which reduces all interaction to some kind of algorithm driven power play. Everything from our personal identities to our fashionable stances may have become chess pieces to be deployed in the complex game of defeating others and maintaining our own pompous but crumbling identities. Positioning seems more important than integrity and the home itself, that bastion of love and comfort is, in this competitive maelstrom, reduced to a receptacle for our vanities. So... what happens when the house of cards collapses, generations are reunited in cramped surroundings and futures are taken hostage by a global pandemic.

Hilarity hopefully.

Ross has delivered a provocative but hope filled comedy. Our wonderful cast will find their inner fools and channel all our lovable but fatally flawed aspirations. This is a play that loves it's characters, it's audience and offers a telling parable for our not so brave new world. Most importantly it reaches out to all of us baffled and shell shocked individuals, not knowing where we want to be.

Peter Houghton

Red Stitch would like to thank the following supporters who generously contribute to our INK program.



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