

The **Dramatist**

Inspiration **ISSUE**

GUARANTEED • NO BUMMERS

Silver Lining Stories
Lynn Nottage & Nilo Cruz
Casting Directors

US \$5 / Canada \$8

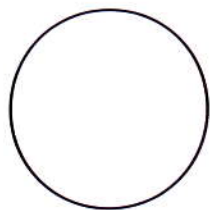


www.dramatistsguild.com

The Journal of the Dramatists Guild of America, Inc.

Dramatists Guild

Fellows



OUR 2008-2009 DRAMATISTS GUILD FELLOWS spent an exciting year developing new work. The extremely talented and motivated group includes Delaney Britt Brewer, Lori

Fischer, Andrea Frierson, Michael Heitzman, Ilene Reid, Stephen Sislen, Robby Stamper, Chris Weikel, Ben Winters, and Lauren Yee. With this issue of *The Dramatist*, we continue a series that will include selections from the Fellows works in progress.

Twice a month, the Fellows met with program advisors Lynn Ahrens, Stephen Flaherty, Susan Miller and Janet Neipris and program director Andrea Lepcio to present their work and discuss it with professionals as well as peers. These sessions are intended both to sustain a sense of community among Fellows and other Guild members and to allow Fellows to explore creative and business issues, drawing on the professionals' experience. Guest writers meet with the Fellows in these sessions as well as for one-on-one mentoring. Guest writers and mentors this year included Edward Albee, David

Auburn, Christopher Burney, Gretchen Cryer, Nancy Ford, Christopher Gatelli, Gary Garrison, David Henry Hwang, Tina Howe, David Ives, Lisa Kron, Michael John LaChiusa, Peter Parnell, Sarah Ruhl, Ralph Sevush, Diana Son, Jeanine Tesori, Alfred Uhry, and David Yazbek.

Now in its tenth year, the Dramatists Guild Fellowship Program was designed to augment the training of emerging American dramatists and enhance the sense of community among them. The Guild and its Council have created the Fellows program to nurture the next generation of American dramatists. The program is unique, not only in the kinds of opportunities it offers, but also because it brings together both playwrights and musical theatre writers to discuss their work and common interests. The Fellows program is designed for emerging theatre writers who have completed a graduate program and are no more than five years past that program, or have comparable experience in organized writers' workshops or other pertinent experience. Each year ten playwrights, composers, and lyricists are selected to participate.

Delaney Britt Brewer

Through the Dramatists Guild Fellowship, I was given the freedom to go back and forth between two pieces: *Wolves* and *Lake Water*. I was writing *Wolves* directly in tandem with the feedback offered through the meetings. On the other hand, bringing in *Lake Water* gave me an outside perspective from a workshop production I was having of the play in February, further aiding in its development. While writing with the insightful feedback of my colleagues, the generosity of the program's leaders, and the wisdom of the dramatists who came in to speak to us, I feel as though I grew as a playwright.



SCENE

SASHA enters carrying champagne. She is wearing shimmering, chic evening wear, with a fur coat draped over her. She is bright, sophisticated. JULIE stands, jaw open, in a flannel, 80's LL Bean coat, and her father's winter boots. Snow falls on both of them in the dark of the forest.

SASHA

The other day in yoga class, Jesus, you should see where I do yoga, it's like a dream. Or a nightmare? Either way you look at it. I mean, it's perfect. It's a perfect yoga class. It's like one of those sequences from an old movie musical. I wish all the woman had on little ermine jackets because they move in this luxurious synchronicity. It's so graceful, so elegant, that it's... almost terrifying. I know. I know. I... exaggerate...you always said that. My grammar sucks and I...exaggerate...so I'm down in...downward facing dog... and...do you remember Vermont? Remember that trip...wait, where was I? So I'm in downward facing dog and I...I just...well I...Did you mean for it? I mean...did you mean for it to hap-

pen? Because you never mentioned it. In fact...you detested the idea of it... of children...And, that was part of the reason...for me to go.

(Beat.)

JULIE

No. I didn't mean for it to happen.

SASHA

So, I'm in downward facing dog...and I.

(Pause.)

Just started to cry.

(Pause.)

And, the young guy next to me, Franz, who insists on not wearing a shirt and sweating constantly, he somehow through all the sweat, notices me crying. And he...Oh god.

JULIE

Oh, god what?

SASHA

Franz came up from behind me and hugged me in the middle of downward

facing dog. And- his sweat starting mixing in with my tears, till we were this amorphous blob of saline and the entire class turned us in stereo, each of them holding this pose of concern, somewhere in between folding leaf and warrior one. And they just stared at me, while I wept in a human pretzel with Franz.

JULIE

What were you crying about?

(Pause.)

SASHA

You.

So, who's the lucky guy?

JULIE

I don't want to talk about it.

SASHA

Fair enough.

(Pause.)

Did you actually like...have sex with a man? Or did you trip over an erect penis in the middle of the road? Or

is this...immaculate? Are you giving birth to the second coming?

JULIE

Yes.

(Pause. [Julie looks away.]

SASHA

Okay. You don't want to talk about it. What would you rather? Your job. How's your job?

JULIE

How's your husband?

SASHA

Not working at your job I don't think.

JULIE

I don't want to talk about me.

SASHA

Surprise, surprise, surprise.

(Pause.)

When do you ever want to talk about yourself?

JULIE

You don't listen!

SASHA

That's bullshit. I do. I do. I...have a lazy eye.

JULIE

Okay. How's my job? I hate my job. I have a Blackberry glued to my hand and an assistant who spends her days

online chatting about her inflamed case of herpes. You might ask, did I crack into her email? No, just passed by her desk to see in giant bold lettering, "HERPES AGAIN!!!!!!OMG!!!!" I thought for a while OMG was like, a strain of Herpes. And then, I heard some twelve-year old girls on the train using the term, and I realized, OMG: Oh My God. Oh my God indeed. Oh my God, this is my life. And Oh my God, what have I done, and...

(SASHA looks bored and sleepy.)

And, Oh my God, that's when I killed that man. With my bare hands and then I dumped him in the river, and that's when the space aliens finally made me their master and that's when-

SASHA

Wait, what?

JULIE

You stopped listening.

SASHA

I didn't. Assistant with an STD. You always hate your assistant. What's new?

(Pause.)

Okay. I have...a bit of an attention problem.

JULIE

So, how is Jerry?

SASHA

Oh, you weren't going let that one go were you?

JULIE

I haven't, no.

SASHA

Jerry's good. Jerry's balding. Jerry falls asleep sometimes when we're making love, so I please myself instead, while he snores.

JULIE

I love...knowing that.

SASHA

I'm married Julie. I'm an old, barren married woman. What do you want? My bills are paid for and I get to do what I want, and not worry. I never worry. I've stopped wanting. Anything. So...that's it.

(Pause.)

Nobody said it was going to be a fairy tale.

(Pause.)

And, yes, I do wake up sometimes, next to Jerry drooling a little bit on his pillow, the way he does, and...I do think for a moment, what if Julie.

JULIE

And?

SASHA

And, that's it. It never goes beyond that because it never could.

(Pause.)

Oh, not that look.

(Pause.)

You are...somehow very beautiful when you hear something you don't want to hear. It made leaving you a very hard thing to do, but easy to...

(Beat.)

You know I never asked.

JULIE

What?

SASHA

What the fuck are you doing out here?

DELANEY BRITT BREWER is a playwright, bookwriter and lyricist living in New York. She was a 2008-9 Dramatists Guild Fellow, and a member of Ensemble Studio Theater's playwriting group: Youngblood. Her work has been produced and workshopped at PS122, Center Stage, Ensemble Studio Theater, Theater at St. Clements (for the New York Musical Theater Festival), Theater Row, The Abingdon, Collective Unconscious, The Chernuchin at the American Theater of Actors, and The Wings Theater.



Ben H. Winters

In my theatre-writing career I've tended to fall back on goofy comedy, as the thing that comes easiest; my dramatist's version of using humor as a defense mechanism. In the Fellowship I unexpectedly received A) the opportunity B) the encouragement and C) the sense of security to focus on a play that is in various ways more personal and more serious, and therefore a lot harder to write.

SCENE 1.

BORDER'S BOOKS; BROAD STREET

Lights up; appreciative laughter and applause. P.B. RIIS, a handsome and dignified professor of American history, 47 years old, stands at a dais, reading aloud from his latest book. His speaking voice, like his writing style, is reflective of his personality: sophisticated, clever, self deprecating, gracious, smug. He smiles to acknowledge his appreciative audience,

and presses on.

RIIS

History records, it must be noted, one dissenting voice amongst the chorus of praise that accompanied Franklin down Market Street that late fall day in 1764. As the parade of dignitaries and common folk, with the famous Dr. Franklin at its head, passed 2nd Street and began the sloping descent to the wharf, a figure appeared in the doorway of the Man Full of Trouble, a tavern popular with Philadelphia's "lower sort." Like Franklin, the man in the doorway was a

printer; and, like Franklin, his Christian name was Benjamin.

RIIS

(Elsewhere on stage, it is 1764, and BENJAMIN WILKES, age 51 and dressed in the rough apron of a late-colonial tradesman, appears in a doorway. Rumpled and agitated, he swigs from a stein of ale.)

This Benjamin Wilkes, drunk, disheveled, and -- we can imagine -- deeply embittered by the ever-growing eminence of his namesake, greeted the