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Liberation

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More Great Plays Available
From OWP

Man Measures Man
by David Robson

4 Males, 2 Females

Synopsis: In the waning days of the Kosovo conflict, two American doctors travel to Macedonia to offer their services to Albanian refugees. Into the chaos of the medical camp, a mysterious boy arrives, forcing the doctors to re-examine their actions and the personal ethics that guide them.

Terminus Americana
by Matt Pelfrey

5 Males, 3 Females with double casting

Synopsis: After barely surviving an office rampage, Mac Winchell is thrust into a nightmare landscape populated by lost Marlboro Men, psychotic vagabonds, sinister corporate thugs and a strange cult known as a “The Church of Christ, Office Shooter”. Mac attempts to escape this twisted reality by undertaking a quest that ultimately leads him into the darkest corners of the American Dream. Terminus Americana is a surreal, visceral and challenging examination of our violence-saturated culture.

LIBERATION

A Drama in Two Acts
by
Steve Patterson

THE CHARACTERS

ZLATKO
Editor-in-Chief

VEDRANA
Editor

DADO
Managing Editor

PETAR
Reporter

MILENA
Entertainment Editor

SASHA
Financial Officer

ISMAIL
City Desk Editor

TUNA
Soldier

LANA
Soldier's Sister

THE TIME: Deep Winter

THE PLACE: A daily newspaper in Sarajevo

MUSIC: Movements from Mozart's Requiem

Dedicated to the people of Sarajevo.

LIBERATION premiered March 11, 1999, at Stark Raving Theatre in Portland, Oregon. Directed by Lisa L. Abbott, the cast included:

Vedrana: Virginia Belt
Zlatko: Jim Davis
Milena: Nancy Wilson
Tuna: Jim Garcia
Lana: Cami Idzerda
Petar: Daniel Flint
Sasha: Jennifer Hartman
Dado: Paul Palazzolo
Ismail: Steve Boss

Other crew included: Myra Donnelley/Dave Demke, Producers; Mary Abel, Stage Manager; Angela Tognoli, Assistant Stage Manager; Paul Palazzolo, Set Design; Angela Meyer, Lighting Design; Mel Fletcher, Sound Design; Deanna S. James, Costumes; Torrey Cornwell, Props; Nicholas Tillett, Sound Board Operator; Kelly Muller, Light Board Operator.

ACT I

SCENE I

(Music: Mozart's Requiem, Requiem & Kyrie movement. Meeting room. Large table. Chairs. Tall windows in back. ZLATKO stands at a window. Smokes. VEDRANA at table. Papers spread in front of her. Pen in hand.)

VEDRANA: Those things will kill you. *(ZLATKO tosses the pack on the table. VEDRANA takes one and lights up.)* How long can we run?

ZLATKO: With the newsprint we've got? A month. If they let us.

VEDRANA: Who knows?

ZLATKO: You.

VEDRANA: Who suspects?

ZLATKO: Dado. Sasha. Probably Milena.

VEDRANA: You want to tell them?

ZLATKO: Sometimes I say to hell with it. Lock the damned doors. Other times...we've come such a long ways.

VEDRANA: You mean shaking loose of the party or staying open this long?

ZLATKO: All of it.

VEDRANA: Couldn't be pride, could it? That feeling of snapping open your paper in the morning.

ZLATKO: And counting the typos? Maybe we get the newsprint, the petrol—

VEDRANA: The money.

ZLATKO: Maybe we stay open. If we close.... People have died working for this paper. Friends have died. If we say enough before it's time...what do we say to them?

VEDRANA: Thus the dead counsel the living.

ZLATKO: Thus. God, this was a beautiful city.

VEDRANA: What about the Americans? Can we get paper from them?

ZLATKO: Diplomacy. They can't take sides.

VEDRANA: I mean the press.

ZLATKO: So do I. Agence France-Presse said they will if the blockade lifts, but who knows?

VEDRANA: So a month left.

ZLATKO: Maybe a month. Then?

VEDRANA: We'll worry about it then.

ZLATKO: I want you to move home. (*VEDRANA shakes her head.*) How can you sleep here? It can't be comfortable. And with the Serb troops so close.... I'm concerned.

VEDRANA: No.

ZLATKO: It seems foolish that.... They can reach us with their artillery, you know! Can probably hit us with their mortars! You're so angry you're rather sleep in a gunsite than at home? (*MILENA enters.*) Can you hold that? Can it keep you warm? I'm sorry. Ah. We're ready to start?

MILENA: I wondered if I could have a minute.

ZLATKO: Of course.

MILENA: With Vedrana.

ZLATKO: Do call the rest of us when you're finished.

MILENA: Thank you.

ZLATKO: Thank you? You're welcome.

(ZLATKO exits. MILENA sits.)

MILENA: I need to ask—

VEDRANA: It's still none of your business.

MILENA: No. About our work. After everything, do you still care?

VEDRANA: Sarajevo needs a paper.

MILENA: That's Zlatko. Do you care? As a witness?

VEDRANA: To what's happened?

MILENA: Yes.

VEDRANA: That's all I care about.

MILENA: I need to know, Vedrana, because if it means the paper—

VEDRANA: You seem nervous.

MILENA: Me? I'm fine. It's just there's this story.... Zlatko have any booze left?

VEDRANA: You've made it this far.

(MILENA gestures offstage. PETAR, TUNA, and LANA enter. Silence.)

VEDRANA: Are you armed?

(TUNA shakes his head.)

VEDRANA: Why are we here? Petar?

PETAR: This is Tuna. His sister, Lana. Tuna has served with the Serbian—

TUNA: We demand asylum.

VEDRANA: Demand?

TUNA: Yes.

VEDRANA: On what grounds?

TUNA: My sister and me, we demand asylum and safe passage under U.N. protection to a neutral country where we can, um, be given new identities and—

VEDRANA: This is a newspaper, Tuna. Not an embassy.

LANA: Serbs have no embassy, ma'am.

VEDRANA: Nor do Sarajevans. Are you still in the army, Tuna?
(LANA grabs his arm. TUNA nods.) You're across enemy lines. Did you desert?

TUNA: I did what they told me.

VEDRANA: Who told you?

TUNA: They told us to burn the houses.

VEDRANA: Whose houses?

TUNA: No more! Not without guarantees!

PETAR: You told me, Tuna. You have to tell her.

TUNA: *(To VEDRANA)* What are you?

VEDRANA: The editor here.

TUNA: No, I mean...what you are.

VEDRANA: Sarajevan.

(Pause.)

PETAR: Tuna's with a Serb unit operating south of here. Infantry. His unit has been engaged with Bosnian—

TUNA: Muslim.

PETAR: —civilians. Isn't that right?

(TUNA shrugs.)

VEDRANA: Whose houses you burned. *(TUNA nods.)* Normally, I'd make room in the paper for a self-confessed arsonist, but these days we have a surplus. Perhaps if there were more...specifics.

MILENA: There's more.

TUNA: For protection. Guaranteed protection.

VEDRANA: I can't protect myself in Sarajevo.

TUNA: Out of Sarajevo.

VEDRANA: An exchange? *(TUNA nods.)* There are routes, Tuna. Routes out of Bosnia. They are difficult and, frankly, expensive. And they put this paper and the people who work here at considerable risk. We might be able to work an arrangement. But, before we do, you need to tell me why we should.

PETAR: Tuna?

TUNA: Our officers told us.

VEDRANA: To burn the houses. They were empty?

TUNA: No.

VEDRANA: What happened to the people?

TUNA: The men. We gathered them up.

VEDRANA: Took them prisoner?

PETAR: Tuna... You can tell her or I can tell her.

TUNA: Took them to the woods.

VEDRANA: To the woods...?

TUNA: We shot them.

VEDRANA: All of them? (*TUNA nods.*) This is very important, Tuna. Did your officers specifically tell you to do this? (*TUNA nods.*) Well.

MILENA: We're not done.

TUNA: I can't.

PETAR: C'mon, man. I brought you in! I brought your sister in! What would you be doing right now?

VEDRANA: I think we're past the point of turning back, Tuna.

TUNA: The women.

VEDRANA: In the villages?

TUNA: Our officers told us....

LANA: Tell her!

TUNA: Told us to make them Serbs.

VEDRANA: Make them Serbs. How do you make them Serbs?

TUNA: Babies.

VEDRANA: Make...Serb babies? (*TUNA nods.*) With Muslim women? (*TUNA nods.*) I see. And if we arrange safe conduct out of Bosnia for you and your sister, you'll tell all you know, on tape, for Petar and Milena? That's what we're talking about? (*TUNA nods.*) For us to do that, there are arrangements to be made. I'll need to talk to our editor-in-chief, and it may take some time. But, with that in mind, I can say yes. We can do that.

LANA: Thank you!

TUNA: You promise?

VEDRANA: Do you?

PETAR: C'mon, guys. Let's try to find us some coffee.

LANA: Thank you, ma'am.

VEDRANA: We'll talk. It's a...pleasure, Tuna, doing business with you.

(VEDRANA puts out her hand. TUNA awkwardly shakes it. PETAR, LANA, and TUNA begin to exit.)

VEDRANA: Tuna? Since you asked, I'm a Muslim. Not a good one, but that's my ancestry.

(PETAR, LANA, and TUNA exit.)

VEDRANA: Ah.

MILENA: You know what this means? This "ethnic cleansing" shit? Whole towns gone. Muslim, Croat. Serb television makes up some horrid bullshit about pushing back Muslim terrorists!

VEDRANA: Noble Serb soldiers saving those poor people. From their neighbors.

MILENA: And the Western press reports it as balance! But this! Eyewitness corroboration to systematic massacre and rape by Serb forces against Bosnians? Right here, right now. What does NATO say? What do the French and Swiss say? Muslims are equal combatants in a civil war? Hell, what does Russia say?

VEDRANA: Russia.

MILENA: And the U.N.? Are they going pretend they control the "safe zones" when—

VEDRANA: Anyone see him come in the building?

MILENA: I don't think. He's been at Petars's—

VEDRANA: Isolate him. Keep him away from the windows.

MILENA: The windows?

VEDRANA: He's a deserter. The Serb's might want him back.

MILENA: Well, they wouldn't come in here.

VEDRANA: Really? I'd heard they weren't that fond of us. I can see where the Serbs might shove aside a few UN peacekeepers to rescue one of their brave comrades. Especially since, Milena, they don't very much like what we've been saying. I'm sure they'll love what we're saying now.

MILENA: Petar was about to lose him. I said bring him, and—

VEDRANA: It's done. Tape him, then get him the hell out.

MILENA: You will run it?

VEDRANA: So will Zlatko.

MILENA: I didn't mean—

VEDRANA: He should have been here for this. His father was a Serb, but his mother is the paper.

MILENA: Even after what that kid said?

VEDRANA: You brought his goddamned commander in and put a gun in my hand, I'd shoot the son-of-a-bitch. And I'd keep shooting until I worked my way to Belgrade. But in this office, this city, there are only Bosnians.

MILENA: I'm trying, Vedrana. Not to judge. I am trying.

VEDRANA: Don't let him out of your sight.

(MILENA kisses VEDRANA on the cheek.)

VEDRANA: Good job to Petar.

MILENA: It's so cute. He's so happy, he keeps sniffing.

VEDRANA: Tell him I wish he'd made it up.

MILENA: What about the foreign press?

VEDRANA: Let 'em read about it like everyone else.

(MILENA exits. VEDRANA waits a few beats. Lights a second cigarette. Carries it to the window. Cries. Lights down.)

SCENE II

(Mozart, Dies Irae movement. Lights up. Editorial conference in progress. Present are ZLATKO, VEDRANA, DADO, SASHA, ISMAIL, MILENA. DADO is at the window with a pair of binoculars.)

DADO: So where's my petrol?

ZLATKO: We're working on it, Dado.

DADO: You've been working. If you can't get any, tell us.

VEDRANA: Then?

ISMAIL: We go home and pack.

VEDRANA: As long as we have stories, we have a paper.

ISMAIL: And ink. Ink helps.

ZLATKO: We do have ink?

ISMAIL: More ink than paper.

VEDRANA: Let's use it. What have we got?

ISMAIL: The usual. Offices closed, utilities down, rationing schedules.

DADO: Obituaries.

SASHA: The usual.

ISMAIL: No travel section.

ZLATKO: The usual is why we do this. Until the situation changes—

DADO: And we close.

ZLATKO: As long as we're able—

DADO: Or they close us.

ZLATKO: Will you please shut the fuck.... What are you doing?

DADO: Watching Blue Helmets.

ZLATKO: You mind joining us?

DADO: I can interrupt you from here.

ZLATKO: Christ. Until we close, or until the war closes us, all we offer the city is paper and ink. We put a paper in their hands, it's a link to the city before the war. The city after.

DADO: After.

ZLATKO: Weather, personals, classified—

ISMAIL: Housing wanted?

ZLATKO: Help wanted. All of it plays a part. All of it says, we may be occupied. We won't be destroyed—

DADO: What a load of shit! Now we're social workers!

VEDRANA: You came in today.

DADO: I never left.

ZLATKO: As long as we can, we do.

SASHA: Zlatko?

ZLATKO: Now the other shoe.

SASHA: Financially, we're....

VEDRANA: Go ahead.

SASHA: Operating conditions are so unusual, there's no way to....
We're not operating as a business. If we operated in terms of profit or
loss, we would have closed two months after the Serbs closed the
roads.

ZLATKO: You don't count paying people in tinned beef?

SASHA: I think in terms of what we can provide. What's absolutely
necessary.

VEDRANA: What's necessary, Sasha?

SASHA: May I suggest...?

ZLATKO: Suggest.

SASHA: An overture.

ZLATKO: We've been through this.

SASHA: A small concession. A call for dialogue. Not for the Serbs
or Croats—

ZLATKO: No.

SASHA: —for the Americans.

ZLATKO: Absolutely not.

SASHA: I don't understand. It seems so little.

ISMAIL: Why do the Serbs want it, then?

MILENA: So they can say we're on one side or the other. Why else?

ISMAIL: They like seeing their name in print?

SASHA: Just a call for talks. If it restores the city to—

VEDRANA: It won't.

SASHA: This completely disregards that this paper was once an
integral part of the city's political life. If it's so important to maintain
appearances—