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The Daly News

(Three-Actor Version)

A musical memoir

Story, book and lyrics by
JONATHAN GILLARD DALY

Music by
LARRY DELINGER and GREGG COFFIN

Dramatic Publishing Company
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Book by JONATHAN GILLARD DALY

Music composed by LARRY DELINGER and GREGG COFFIN

Musical arrangements by GREGG COFFIN

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(THE DALY NEWS)

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The Daly News premiered at PCPA Theaterfest in Santa Maria, Calif., on Dec. 2, 1993. Originally, the show called for five men and four women. This version of *The Daly News* was subsequently produced in 1994 at Sacramento Theatre Company in California under the title *When You Come Home to Me*. In 2008, the show was rewritten as a three-actor version. It opened at Milwaukee Chamber Theatre in Wisconsin and ran from November to December 2008. *The Daly News* was then produced at John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wis., in 2009; the Great River Shakespeare Festival, Winona, Minn., in 2010; and the Oregon Cabaret Theatre, Ashland, Ore., in 2010.

Credits for the Milwaukee Chamber Theatre production are as follows:

CAST:

ACTOR ONE..... Jonathan Gillard Daly
ACTOR TWO Jack Forbes Wilson
ACTOR THREE Jeff Schaetzke

PRODUCTION STAFF:

Director Michael Wright
Production Stage Manager Judy Martel
Scenic Designer Stephen Hudson-Mairet
Costume Designer Ellen Kozak
Lighting Designer Matthew J.A. Kerr
Properties Designer Meghan Savagian
Education Director/Literary Manager Jacque Troy
Production Manager/Company Manager Brandy Kline
Additional music arrangements Jack Forbes Wilson

The Daly News

(Three-Actor Version)

CHARACTERS

MARTIN DALY

SCHATZIE: Martin's wife.

Their sons:

BOB

GENE

CHUCK

DAVE

MARION: Married to Bob.

RUTH: Married to Gene.

JANE: Married to Chuck.

JON: Grandson to Martin and Schatzie.

KATE

WALKING AIR CORPS MANUAL

MECHANIC

MARV BERZ

RUSS Bollerjack

COMMANDER PHILLIPS

SID

DOUBLING

ACTOR ONE: Jon, Martin, Kate and Bollerjack

ACTOR TWO: Gene, Dave, Marion, Commander Phillips,
Berz, Sid, Mechanic and Walking Air Corps Manual

ACTOR THREE: Bob, Chuck and Ruth

CHARACTER NOTES

All three actors play Schatzie at various points. Actor Two and Actor Three play the piano throughout. Sometimes they play together; at other points, they alternate. The play can also be performed with three actors and an onstage musician at the piano.

TIME AND PLACE

1943 to 1946; and the present. Milwaukee and various locales around the world.

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The Daly News

(Three-Actor Version)

ACT I

(The set is simple: a piano on one side of the stage, and a rickety old wooden desk on the other. On the desk is a manual typewriter, circa 1925. Papers are arranged in carefully ordered chaos. Other items on the desk include an ashtray full of cigarette butts, a glass containing the dregs of a bourbon on the rocks, a bottle of bourbon, an ice chest, a stack of "V" Mail. A baggy old sweater is slung over the back of the desk's chair. At curtain, lights fade to black. In the darkness, a voice is heard singing, a cappella.)

(#1: "Timepiece")

JON (*ACTOR ONE*).

THIS IS MY TIMEPIECE
A STORY THAT I TELL
OF LOVE FROM A DISTANCE
YOU MAY KNOW IT WELL.

(Lights up, revealing JON. ACTOR TWO is sitting at the piano. ACTOR THREE is near him on a stool.)

JON (*cont'd*).

HEED VOICES CALLING
AND YOU WILL UNDERSTAND
THIS IS MY TIMEPIECE
HOLD IT IN YOUR HAND.

I have this recurring dream.

I'm a little baby, no more than a year old, bundled up in the back seat of an old convertible. It's a beautiful crisp October afternoon. I can smell apples and burning leaves. I can hear the crunch of acorn shells as we drive over them. I can see long skinny shadows draping across my blanket; and I can feel the autumn sun wrapping around me like an old sweater. I look at the driver in the rearview mirror, and I see the top half of a familiar face: the high, creased forehead crowned with neatly cropped white hair; gentle brown eyes encased in wire-rimmed glasses.

I used to think this dream was about my father. And then one night, I got a closer look in the rearview mirror. The man driving was my grandfather, Martin Daly. A man who never owned a convertible. A man I never knew. A man who died years before I was born.

(Lights build. ACTORS TWO and THREE join in with the next verse.)

ACTOR THREE.

THIS IS A STORY
OF FATHERS AND THEIR SONS

ACTOR TWO.

AFFECTION UNSPOKEN
BETWEEN STRONG, SILENT ONES

ALL.

A DI'RY, A MEM'RY
A BOND THAT SAW THEM THROUGH
THIS IS A TIMEPIECE—

JON.

MINE TO GIVE TO YOU.

On the first Christmas after my dad's death, my mom presented everybody in the family with copies of *The Daly News*. Thousands of pages, single-spaced, pounded out on

an old Underwood typewriter onto onion-skin stationery by my grandfather, Martin Daly. During World War II, with his kids scattered all over the globe, Martin kept in touch with them by editing this weekly newsletter of his own creation. He designed his own masthead, wrote his own stories, and even added the occasional photo page.

It took me over a year to get through *The Daly News* the first time. Martin painstakingly recorded birthdays, fishing trips, sumptuous meals prepared by his wife, Schatzie; the parade of colorful visitors to the Old Manse on Washington Boulevard; seasonal rituals like the cleaning out of the garage, and the all-important removal of the storm windows.

No topic was neglected.

(#2: “The Daly News”)

JON (*cont'd*). Because Martin knew that to his small circulation of readers—his kids preparing for war—every word was a visit home.

ACTOR TWO.

HERE'S A VIEW OF WORLD WAR TWO THROUGH
ANXIOUS EYES

ACTOR THREE.

RAILROAD STATIONS SET THE SCENE FOR SAD
GOODBYES
DADDIES LEAVIN' CHILDREN, HUSBANDS
LEAVIN' WIVES

ACTOR TWO.

SEPARATION, DEPRIVATION, RATIONED LIVES

JON.

LOOKIN' FOR A WAY TO KEEP THE FAMILY
CONNECTED

ALL.

THE DALY NEWS.

(Underscoring continues.)

JON. Every Tuesday night, from 1943 to 1946, Martin set up shop in the basement of the Old Manse. Armed with a bottle of bourbon, a bucket of ice, and a fresh pack of Lucky Strikes, he'd clear off the pool table, and spread the avalanche of letters from his kids over the green felt. Bob, Gene, Chuck and Kate, his only daughter, became his field reporters, he added his own news of local interest, and long after midnight he'd finish the latest edition. Then it was upstairs for a few hours of sleep. In the morning, he'd take the number thirty-one bus down to his job at the bank, where he spent his lunch hour mailing out carbon copies to everyone, keeping one for the archives. By Wednesday afternoon *The Daly News* was on its way ...

BOB'S MY DAD, A NAVIGATOR STUCK STATESIDE

BOB (*ACTOR THREE*).

LEFT BEHIND MY BABY GIRL AND LONELY BRIDE

JON.

GENE'S IN THE PACIFIC—

GENE (*ACTOR TWO*).

I CAN'T TELL YOU WHERE—

JON.

CHUCK IS OUT OF BOOT CAMP—

CHUCK (*ACTOR THREE*).

SEND ME OVER THERE!

JON.

KATE IS NEWLY MARRIED
BUT HER HUSBAND'S IN THE AIR CORPS—

ALL.

THE DALY NEWS.

JON (*donning spectacles and sweater*). And in the middle of it all is my grandfather, Martin: stationed at the typewriter, bourbon in hand, doing his bit for the war at home!

(*JON is now MARTIN.*)

MARTIN.

KEEP THE PRESSES ROLLIN', GOTTA DO MY PART
TALES OF INTEREST, COMIN' FROM A HOPEFUL
HEART
KEEP THE MESSAGE LIGHT, AND HOLD THE
BLUES AT BAY
LET YOU KNOW I'M THINKIN' OF YOU EVERY DAY

ALL.

IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO GET ALONG,
WE REALLY MEAN IT—

MARTIN.

THE DALY NEWS ...

MARTIN & ACTOR THREE.

THE DALY NEWS ...

ALL.

THE DALY NEWS ...

(*MARTIN settles into work behind the typewriter.*)

MARTIN. March 5, 1943: First Edition.

There ain't much news on the old home front. Everyone we can send to war has been sent to war, and after the social event of the year—Kate's wedding to Lou—everyone we can marry off during the current season has been married

off. About the only thing we can do is pass along the news of one absent sibling to another. So let's go to press!

First up tonight—the eldest son and heir to all our debts: Lieutenant Robert C. Daly: Barracks 2, Class D, University of Denver ... Front and center!

(ACTOR THREE leaps up and enters the scene. He is now BOB.)

BOB. Yes, SIR!

(For just a moment, MARTIN removes his spectacles. JON speaks to the audience.)

JON. That's my dad.

(JON puts on the spectacles. MARTIN continues.)

MARTIN. Bob reports from navigators' school that he is being subjected to a lot of exercise, which he never had before—and that he's getting a lot of book learning, of which he has had plenty. Get a load of these grades!

BOB. History: 99, mathematics: 95, physics: 93, air regulations: 100, physical education: ... none of your business!

MARTIN. Bob is too humble to blow his own horn, so I'm gonna do it for him—

BOB. Oh no—

MARTIN. We have a squadron leader in the family! You know how they have all those formal marches when the bigwigs come to inspect the troops? Well, Bob is ... well, he's the grand marshal or whatever they call it. Last week he got a personal commendation from the governor of Colorado!

BOB. Actually, the men got the commendation. I just stood out front and tried not to get in their way.

MARTIN. Of course, leadership comes naturally to Bob. I remember when his squad at Boy Scout camp took first place in camp neatness, after he'd practically got down on his hands and knees and scrubbed the sand in front of the tent—

BOB. Somebody had to do it—

MARTIN. I'll never forget that day. Frank Mooney was livid! His son, the other Bob, was in charge of the next tent, and Frank was up in arms that our Bob won the medal!

BOB. Bob Mooney couldn't even keep his teeth clean!

MARTIN. Our Bob has always been tidy, I'll tell you that. Schatzie could never get him to eat unless she wiped his hands and face between every bite—

GENE. He still eats that way!

MARTIN. So this morning the phone rings, bright and early, and it's Bob, calling to wish his little girl a happy birthday. She turned two today ...

BOB (*on the phone*). Anne ... Annnne ... it's your daddy ... hello—

MARTIN. Anne took the phone, and I started cooing and clucking and standing on my head, trying to get her to say something—

BOB. Hellooo ... Annnne ... is anybody there?

(#3: "In the Distance")

MARTIN. Then she looks out the window and sees some young fellow calling to his friend out on the street. She drops the phone, runs to the front door, and starts calling to him, "Daddy! Daddy!" That got me laughing so hard I clean forgot that Bob was still at the other end of the line!

BOB. Hello? Hello?

MARTIN. How I wish you could hear her chatter on, Bob. She goes at it all day long! She even calls me Daddy!

BOB.

ANNE ...

I'M IN THE ARMY NOW, I'M LIVING FAR AWAY
I WISH THAT YOU COULD TALK TO ME,
I WISH YOU'D SAY,
THAT YOU REMEMBER ME

I WISH THAT WHAT I SAY TO YOU COULD MAKE
YOU SMILE

I WISH YOU KNEW I'LL BE HOME IN A LITTLE
WHILE

PLEASE WAIT FOR ME ...

BUT WORDS ARE ONLY SOUNDS TO YOU
THE THOUGHT BEHIND THEM CAN'T GET
THROUGH

AND IN THE DISTANCE, I CAN FEEL YOU DRIFT
AWAY

ANNE ...

I CALL YOUR NAME, I BABBLE WORDS INTO THE
PHONE

THE TRUTH IS THAT I CAN'T EXPLAIN WHY I'M
NOT HOME

BUT STILL I TRY.

THE AWKWARD SILENCE SAYS I'M OUT OF
THINGS TO SAY

YOU'VE GIVEN UP, I HEAR YOU AS YOU WALK
AWAY

I SAY GOODBYE.

SO MUCH OF YOU I'LL NEVER SEE

YOUR CHILDHOOD FEELS SO LOST TO ME

AND IN THE DISTANCE, I CAN FEEL YOU DRIFT
AWAY.

*(JON removes his spectacles and speaks to the audience.
Underscoring continues.)*

JON. There's a photo of my dad that was taken in 1942, right after he'd joined the Army. All the years I was growing up, this mature, confident soldier smiled down at me from the mantle in our den. I always thought he looked so old. At least forty.

It's been over twenty-five years since he died. When I look at the picture now, I see a frightened, lonely young man, looking lost and bewildered to be in a uniform, miles away from home for the first time in his life. I feel sorry for him. And I wish I could have known him in those days, before he grew up and became my father.

BOB (*to JON*).

IN MORE WAYS THAN YOU CARE TO SEE
PERHAPS YOU DO RESEMBLE ME ...

BOB & JON.

AND IN THE DISTANCE, I CAN FEEL YOU DRIFT
AWAY

JON.

OH DAD ...

BOB.

YOUR DAD ...

BOB & JON.

WE'LL TURN BACK TIME ... SOMEDAY.

(Music segues into the next song. ACTOR TWO is now playing GENE.)

(#4: "On This Rock")

GENE.

HELLO OUT THERE ...
I'M HERE SOMEWHERE

GENE (*cont'd*).

I'M SAFE

I'M SOUND

MY FEET ON GROUND ...

MARTIN. June 6, 1943: 13th edition! We have finally heard from Gene! Still can't tell us where he is, but he's dropping a few clues. (*Reading.*) "As I write this letter, I am lying on the beach in my swimming trunks. This island is one of those beautiful tropical paradises you read about, being covered from stem to stern with coconut trees."

(*Aside.*) Who says war is hell?

(*ACTOR THREE is at the piano.*)

GENE.

WELL I'M ON THIS ROCK

AND I WANT TO KNOW

THE NAME OF THE PAPER-PUSHING

GOVERNMENT JOE

WHO STUCK ME HERE

I'M BORED AND I'M HORNY

AND I'M GOING INSANE

FROM THE HEAT AND THE RATS

AND THE NON-STOP RAIN

I'M IN HELL

BUT I'M NOT ALLOWED TO TELL

(*Music continues as MARTIN reads.*)

MARTIN. "Please don't worry about me for I'm still safe and primitively comfortable. I'll let you know in plenty of time when or if you ever have to worry, and then we can worry our collective heads off together. There is no sense in wasting time and losing sleep over nothing."