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Dramatic Publishing

VOICES FROM THE SHORE

A Play in Two Acts

by

MAX BUSH



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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For Judyth, and John

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VOICES FROM THE SHORE WAS selected as a 2003 finalist in the Plays in Our Schools program sponsored by the American Alliance of Theater and Education and received a workshop in March of 2003 at Grandview High School, in Denver, Colorado. Grandview subsequently fully produced the play in February 2004, under the direction of Dr. Michael Pearl.

VOICES FROM THE SHORE was co-commissioned by Penn Charter High School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Lawrence High School in Lawrence, Kansas. On November 17, 2000, it opened at Penn Charter with the following cast and crew:

Joel	Karl Blumenthal
Lucas	John Sullivan-Rivera
Beth	Colette Oldham
Laura	Carly Keidel
Trisha	Catherine Pappas
Holly	Jennie Rosen
Rick	Chris Covollo
Julie	Abby Mann
Tom	Michael Candelori
Coby	Julia Soffa
Katherine	Lauren Edgerton
Ghost	David Erlbaum
Demon	Matt Volk
Dying Girl	Hillary Bennet

Director Eva Kay Noone
 Assistant to Director Chrisina Rose
 Set Designer Dirk Durosette
 Stage Crew Advisor Michael Roche
 Costume Designer Millie Hubel
 Lighting Designer Krista Billings
 Percussion Composition & Performance Jeremy Schilling
 Stage Manager Ryan Liddell
 Production Manager Jessi Stein
 Light Board Operator Hannah Baumgartner
 Sound Board Operator Ben Gillespie
 Poster and Program Cover Design Matt Volk
 Ticket Design Jerome Wright
 Running Crew Devra Friedman, Melissa Lucas

VOICES FROM THE SHORE opened at Lawrence High School on October 25, 2001, with the following cast and crew:

Joel Peter Clark
 Lucas Ely Fair
 Beth Julie Thomas
 Laura Brianna Orton
 Trisha Caitlin Welch
 Holly Kasey Ross
 Rick Jason Russell
 Julie Tyler Levy
 Tom Wesley Teal
 Coby Ashley Crowder
 Katherine Jeni Phillips
 Ghost Kenith Easthouse
 Demon Dennis Mersmann

Dying Girl Asha Park-Carter

Director Jeanne Averill

Technical Director & Lighting Design . . . Heather Schmidt

Assistant Directors Ariel Clark, Michael Monaghan

Stage Managers Kayla Bennett, Ashley Jones

Set Kayla Bennett, Ashley Jones, Erica Fisher,
 Erin Niedenthal, Kasey Ross, Tyler Levy, Wesley Teal

Props Jeni Phillips, Heidi Haynes, Dennis Mersmann

Sound . . Michael Bradford, Kenith Easthouse, Sara Miller,
 Asha Park-Carter, Kellyn Young

Publicity . . Ashley Crowder, Will Brubaker, Jason Russell,
 Julie Thomas, Caitlin Welch

Lights Brianna Orton, Justin Bullock, Peter Clark,
 Rachel Hillmer

Costumes Ely Fair

SONG CREDITS (music in back of book): Original music and lyrics by Dale Dieleman.

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VOICES FROM THE SHORE

A Play in Two Acts
For 6 Men and 8 Women

CHARACTERS

LUCAS 17-18, Joel's best friend
JOEL 17-18, Lucas' best friend
BETH 17-18, Joel's girlfriend
LAURA 17-18
TRISHA 17-18
HOLLY 17-18
RICK 18, Holly's boyfriend
JULIE 17-18, resident of the psych ward
TOM 17-18, resident of the psych ward
COBY 17-18, resident of the psych ward
KATHERINE. 17-18, resident of the psych ward
VOICES:
 GHOST of 17-18-year-old male
 DEMON
 DYING GIRL 17-18

PLACE: Joel's beach and the day room in an acute-care, locked, adolescent psychiatric ward.

TIME: ACT I, SCENE I: Spring vacation, this school year.
Dusk. SCENE II: A couple of hours later. ACT II,
SCENE I: 3 days later. SCENE II: 4 weeks later.

Approximate running time: 1 hour, 35 minutes.

(Lights crossfade down on beach, up on day room. KATHERINE is still sitting in same position, JULIE is gone. TOM enters with JOEL, giving him a tour of the ward. JOEL is subdued, tranquilized; TOM is nicely dressed, bright and helpful.)

TOM. This is the day room. When you're not in therapy or group or you're tired of being in your room, you can hang out in here. Games, TV, Katherine. Hi, Katherine. (No response, of course.) She's not moving much, lately.

(COBY enters behind TOM, gooses him.)

COBY. Tom! Just trying to take that long stick out of your butt. (COBY is a big girl, loud and direct. She wears a T-shirt with the sleeves ripped out, tight, old jeans and boots. She also wears a large bandage on one of her upper arms.)

TOM. This is Coby; she's impossible to ignore. Coby, Joel.

COBY. Hey, welcome to where it isn't. (*Shaking his hand.*)

Don't tell anyone anything you don't want everyone to know. (*Aside to JOEL.*) You smuggle in any cigarettes?

JOEL. No.

COBY. Damn, you could go crazy in here waiting for one.

Well, Katherine, back to the game.

TOM. Chess, with a catatonic?

COBY (*sitting at chessboard in front of KATHERINE*).

Have you decided on your next move, Princess?

TOM. Do you think that's a fair game?

COBY. As fair as any in life, Tom. (*Moving KATHERINE's piece.*) You want to move your knight here, Princess? What a darlin' move. And this is my move. (*She moves her piece onto the same square, pounds on KATHERINE's piece.*) Die! Die! Die! Die! (*She throws piece onto floor. Sweetly.*) Sorry, sweetheart. Your knight died.

TOM. Isn't that a little cruel?

COBY. She'll remember this later when she starts moving again. Then it'll really piss her off. This time I want her to have a reason to be mad at me and squeal on me about hoardin' food in my room. (*To KATHERINE.*) And you can tell the nurses, again, where I hide my cigarettes, Princess. (*To TRISHA.*) She'll love it.

TOM. Why don't you take whatever problem you're having to group and leave her alone.

COBY. Hey, we're supposed to relate. I'm relating.

TOM. But in positive ways.

COBY. It's positive! I'm winning!

(*JULIE enters.*)

JULIE (*to TOM*). I want to see Jacob.

TOM. He's no longer living, Julie.

JULIE. No longer living? (*She exits.*)

TOM. That was Julie.

JOEL. Is this going to help me?

TOM. Come on, I'll show you the rec room and my favorite room, the kitchen. (*They exit.*)

COBY (*quickly turning back to chessboard*). Did you move somethin' while my back was turned? (*She looks at KATHERINE. No response. Sings.*) "She'll be coming 'round the mountain when she comes—" (*Indicates for KATHERINE to sing line. No response.*) "She'll be coming 'round the mountain when she comes—" (*Again indicating for KATHERINE to sing. No response. Looking into KATHERINE's eyes.*) Damn, something must have happened to you, girl. Come on, it's just you and me, now. What was it? (*No response.*) *Mira, chica, quiero ayudarte!** What has hurt you? (*No response.*) Your move. (*Looks at board.*) Your other knight...? (*She holds piece up, rides it in the air.*) Look at him ride so proud and perfect...just like you...pretty and proud and perfect...here? Perfect. (*She picks up her queen.*) This is my queen. (*She pounds it on KATHERINE's knight.*) Boom!!! Boom!!! DIE!!! DIE!!! (*She throws it away. Sweetly.*) All your knights are gone. Sometimes, things happen to you you can't believe. And then you ain't got no more knights... Now what are you going to do? Freeze up and stop the world. That's a plan I guess. For a while.

(*TRISHA enters day room.*)

* Look girl, I want to help you.

TRISHA. Of course— Playing chess with a catatonic?

COBY. Artiste! Look, Katherine, it's Trisha the Artiste!
(*TRISHA and COBY embrace.*) Hey, you're just visitin',
right?

TRISHA. Oh, yeah, I'm fine.

COBY. How'd you know I was in?

TRISHA. I just guessed.

COBY. Lucky guess. I get out this weekend. We got to get
together!

TRISHA (*taking COBY's arm, referring to the bandage*).
What did you do?

COBY. Ah, I was doin' great, then Ronnie jumped on the
Harley and headed out West without me. Broke our
dreams.

TRISHA. This wasn't going to happen again.

COBY. Yeah, I forgot everything I knew. Went back to
what I was.

TRISHA. We can't do that.

COBY. It's good to see you! This place is borin' without
you dancin' in the halls and Katherine not screamin' at
everybody, yet. How you doin'? You're lookin' great!

TRISHA. I'm going to college next year.

COBY. Aw, man, that's hot. Damn, girl, goin' to college!
You goin' in art?

TRISHA. Yeah.

COBY. Yeah, you're an artist, Trisha! That's you! I knew
you'd move ahead! Hey, Katherine, Trisha's goin' to
college! What are you goin' to do when you get off that
royal butt of yours? You dropped out of high school,
Princess. (*Back to TRISHA.*) She'll tell me later.

(JOEL and TOM walk back in. DYING GIRL, one of JOEL's VOICES, enters with them. She is not speaking, but she is there, and JOEL knows she is. She moves through the room, checking it and the people out. DYING GIRL is strong, womanly, elegant and—surprisingly—capable of real warmth and compassion. She's dressed in normal, lovely clothes and has a deep, open wound on her forehead. Her skin is pale. JOEL sees TRISHA, but he's not sure if she's there or not.)

TOM. If there's anything you want, talk to your nurse. You always have one assigned to you. But you can talk to any of the nurses. They're all nice.

(During the following, until she speaks, DYING GIRL kneels, carefully touches her head with her handkerchief, looks at it to see if there is fresh blood on it—there is. She touches it to her head again, to remove the blood, then ritualistically folds her handkerchief, puts it away.)

TRISHA *(to COBY)*. I'll be back.

TOM. Will you be all right?

JOEL. Yeah. *(TRISHA steps toward JOEL. JOEL looks to TOM, then back at TRISHA.)*

TRISHA. I'm really here, if that's what you're thinking.

JOEL *(quite subdued, tranquilized)*. Hey, Trisha. How did you get in?

TRISHA. I know people here. Hi, I'm Trisha.

TOM. I'm Tom. Pleased to meet you. You know Joel?

TRISHA. Yeah, he invited me to his party, tonight.

TOM. Oh, that's nice. *(He sits on couch, reads.)*

DYING GIRL *(rising)*. Look at me.

JOEL (*to TRISHA*). Why are you here?

TRISHA To see how you're doing?

DYING GIRL. Look at me. Look at what you've done.

JOEL. I don't know if I should be here.

TRISHA. I think you should, even though it's hard—especially at first. And then? You'll get some answers and you'll start to understand things because right now, I don't think anything is making sense to you.

JOEL. Yeah.

DYING GIRL. Look at me.

JOEL. I see you! What do you want me to do?!

DYING GIRL. Don't give up on me. Don't leave me to die.

JOEL. How can I leave you? You are always here!

TRISHA. And I wanted to tell you: it gets better.

JOEL. What? Oh. Thanks.

DEMON (*suddenly appearing*). She wants to see you, to tell the others. The doctors sent her.

JOEL (*to DEMON*). No they didn't. Leave her alone.

DYING GIRL. Listen to her. She can help you.

DEMON (*referring to DYING GIRL*). Let this one die, like the others. You will never go with her.

TRISHA. Do you know what I just said?

JOEL. When?

TRISHA. Just a minute ago?

JOEL. You told me it gets better.

DEMON (*referring to TRISHA*). If she stays we'll hurt her.

JOEL (*to TRISHA*). I think you'd better go.

TRISHA. Is there anything you want me to tell Beth and Lucas?

JOEL. Tell them it gets better.

TRISHA. I'm going to visit with my friend Coby, and then? if you want to talk to me, again, just tell me.

JOEL. I want to see—

DYING GIRL. Don't forget me. You did this.

JOEL. I want to see—

DYING GIRL. If you let me die, you will die. You know that.

JOEL. Yes I know!

TRISHA. You want to see Beth?

JOEL. Beth?

TRISHA. You said you wanted to see...?

JOEL. Lucas. Tell Lucas I have to talk to him.

DEMON. He won't come. He knows what you did. He's afraid of you.

TRISHA. I'll tell him to come as soon as he can. *(She returns to COBY. JOEL takes DYING GIRL's hand, leads her to a place, sits with her. Then he takes her handkerchief and carefully blots the blood on her forehead.)*

COBY. New guy.

TRISHA. Yeah.

(Lights fade on day room,

AFTERWORD

For this play, it was a clear choice of mine not to include any adults. This presented challenges, considering the subject matter of some of the play.

But I was writing a drama to be performed in the high school, by high school actors. The commissioners asked to keep the adult roles to a minimum. They wished to cast the important roles—all roles if possible—age appropriately, with their students. This would focus the entire play on the young characters—their experiences, their perceptions. Any adult perceptions would have to be filtered through them.

A number of years ago, I worked on a twelve-bed acute-care psychiatric ward. I must confess it feels somewhat unrealistic, in certain moments in this play, for the staff not to appear in the day room, especially when someone is experiencing an emotional crisis.

However, by excluding staff, the young people in the play are forced to deal with whatever arises themselves (as they often did on the ward). I felt it would reveal more to us about the young people, in a more efficient way, in a more dramatic way, than if interrupted by the hospital staff.

Also, I wanted the play focused as little as possible on the mental-health system. I wished to focus more on issues in the characters themselves, all the characters, and on this particular period in their lives.

Of course, the characters themselves do have the benefit of the complete hospital staff and other adults. But we don't see the fact of their interactions, only the effects of them.

Also, I've taken out most of the diagnostic references. I found these distracting. In the hospital, on the ward, it seemed that diagnostics was an inexact science—albeit an important element in treatment. But I found, by including diagnostic references in the play, they sometimes seem to limit the perception of audience members. The specific diagnostic labels seemed to contain inflexible connotations. And some audience would focus on the diagnosis at the expense of the full character. In addition, there would be irrelevant, fruitless discussion about the correct diagnosis of a given character.

Coby is not manic depressive (bipolar), nor is she delusional or suicidal. Moreover, she frequently has her attention out on other people and demonstrates a genuine positive regard for them and their success in the world (especially Trisha).

Katherine's movements: as pointed out in the text, although she is catatonic, Katherine can be led. The best way is to walk arm in arm, side by side, pulling her along. She will walk slowly, rigidly, stiffly—but she does not lurch. At no time, while Katherine is catatonic, when Coby moves Katherine's arms or hands, is she limp or does she move quickly. There is always stiffened resistance.

As stated in the text, Joel's drums are basically a single person playing a complete drum set rhythmically, musically. The drums keep a strong rock and roll beat that Joel

can follow—with crescendos and flourishes—that is not too fast and never frenetic. The drums must fit the rhythms in the scene and build as the scene builds.

Please do not expand the Voices electronically, such as adding reverb or echo to them. This will tend to dominate too many moments of the show, as well as present an inaccurate statement about Joel's Voices.

When Joel and the Ghost speak and move together, the more interesting the choreography, the more compelling the moment becomes.

— Max Bush
March 2004