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*Dramatic Publishing*

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# 2.5 Minute Ride

Comedy/Drama by  
Lisa Kron

"Celebrates the power of laughter to help us come to grips  
with the sometimes horrific turns life takes."

—Variety

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# 2.5 Minute Ride

**"When I realized that the show was about to end, my first thought was: Can't she just call home, get some more stories, work them out, and keep going?"** —*Back Stage West*

**"Bespeaks the remarkable resiliency of the human spirit."**  
—*Los Angeles Times*

*Comedy/Drama. By Lisa Kron. Cast: 1w.* In *2.5 Minute Ride* we're taken on a poignant and funny journey, rich in anecdotal detail, through the Kron family album. Among Lisa's eccentric relations, for example, are the grandmother who stuffed her house with cosmetics because she felt sorry for the Avon lady, and the brother who, residing among wall-to-wall Gentiles in Lansing, Michigan, had to resort to the Internet to find a Jewish bride. And there's Lisa's father, 74-year-old Walter, who, in spite of near-blindness, diabetes and a heart condition, insists on family trips to Cedar Point amusement park in Sandusky, Ohio, the world capital of roller coasters, to take breathtaking rides such as the Demon Drop and Iron Dragon with Lisa. But this isn't her only journey with her ailing father, Walter, a German-born Jew who attended school with boys in Hitler Youth uniforms and escaped Nazi Germany as a teenager by *kindertransport* only to return as an American soldier assigned to interrogate captured German personnel following the war. His parents, however, were unable to escape. In an effort to better understand her father's personal history, Lisa accompanies Walter to Auschwitz, where his parents were killed, and where she understands more clearly the joys and sorrows of her father's heart. With wit and compassion, Lisa creates a complex, startling and searingly funny meditation on how human beings make sense of tragedy, grief and everyday life. *Approximate running time: 70 minutes. Bare stage with props.*

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# 2.5 MINUTE RIDE

By  
LISA KRON



**Dramatic Publishing**

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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In addition, all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgments on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“The world premiere of *2.5 Minute Ride*, directed by Lowry Marshall, was produced at the La Jolla Playhouse, La Jolla, California; Michael Greif, Artistic Director, and Terrence Dwyer, Managing Director.”

“*2.5 Minute Ride*, directed by Mark Brokaw, was produced in New York by The Joseph Papp Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival, George C. Wolfe, Producer, in March 1999.”

“The original script for the La Jolla Playhouse production was developed through collaborative work with Lowry Marshall. The script was further developed through a residency at SoHo Rep, New York City, in April 1997 presented by David Binder.”

The script for *2.5 Minute Ride* was developed through collaboration with Lowry Marshall.

*2.5 Minute Ride* premiered at La Jolla Playhouse on September 24, 1996. It was directed by Lowry Marshall. The set was designed by Richard Ortenblad Jr., the lights by Trevor Norton and the sound and original music by Dan Froot. The production stage manager was Beth Robertson.

After changes to the script, a workshop production of *2.5 Minute Ride* opened in New York at the SoHo Rep in association with David Binder on April 2, 1997. Directorial consultants were Dan Hurlin and Peg Healey. The lighting design was by Susan A. White, sound design by Darron L. West and original music by Dan Froot. The production stage manager was Liza Dunn.

*2.5 Minute Ride* opened at The Joseph Papp Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival in New York on March 17, 1999. It was directed by Mark Brokaw. The set was designed by Allen Moyer, the lights by Kenneth Posner, the costume by Jess Goldstein, the sound by Darron L. West and original music by Dan Froot. The production stage manager was Bess Marie Glorioso.

## **2.5 MINUTE RIDE**

CHARACTER — Lisa

TIME — Tonight.

PLACE — This theater.



A note on the performance of *2.5 Minute Ride*—

The prevailing tone of this piece should be authentic (not performed) speech. These stories should be told the way we really tell stories—the sentences not premeditated but unfolding for the teller as she speaks. She should be energized, as people who tell stories in life are, by her pleasure in shaping her words and images in the moment to connect with her listeners.

## 2.5 MINUTE RIDE

*(As the audience hears the sound of a slide projector advancing to the next slide, lights up on Lisa, holding a “clicker” and a laser pointer. She describes the following “slides” which are not actually slides but squares of colored light. As she talks she indicates what she sees with the pointer.)*

These are my grandparents. My father’s parents. This, as you can see, is their wedding picture. I never knew them, actually... My father left his hometown in Germany in 1937, by himself, when he was fifteen years old, as a part of a program to get Jewish children out of Germany. I’m making a videotape about my father—about his experiences—well, actually about this trip we took together to his hometown in Germany and to then Auschwitz.

*(Changes the slide with the clicker. The sound of an advancing slide projector is heard as a new square of light replaces the old one.)*

Okay. This is my father’s hometown. And here you can see we’re looking down on the town from the clock tower. It was originally a walled city—I think you can see a little bit of the wall right here. It’s very beautiful. All these red

roofs. My dad remembers every cobblestone in this city. He knows its history from its inception in the middle ages and I think he considers himself a part of that continuum. It was incredible, actually, when we were driving around. He can't see too well anymore but he'd say things to me like, "Now if you look to your left, you should see two dirt tracks," and there would be two dirt tracks, and he'd say, "That road was built by Napoleon." Then he'd say, "All right now we're going to go over a bump in the road," and we'd go over a bump, and then he'd say, "And if it's still there, you'll see to your right, a hill with a ditch at the bottom," and there would be this hill and a ditch. And he'd say, "I remember when I was a boy I used to ride my bike as fast as I could down that hill and try not to get caught by the group of boys who were chasing me but if I did I developed a technique in which I would lie down in that ditch and pull one of the boys on top of me to use as a human shield."

*(Changes the slide.)*

Okay. This is my dad, you can see, and he's standing outside this apartment building where he lived when he was about three or four years old and here you can see that he's pointing up to this second-story window. And he was telling me here about how, when he was about three or four years old, he put his head through the glass in that window. He said, "I planned it out very carefully. If I put my head through at the right angle and with the right amount of force it would pop right through the glass and then I could watch the parade going on down in the street." And I said, you know, "Did you hurt yourself?" And he said, "No, no.

It worked out about the way I'd planned." We took this trip about seven or eight years ago, now. My dad had been back to Germany several times and I had been there once but we'd never gone together and this was something we always really wanted to do. So...

*(Changes the slide.)*

Okay, we're still in Germany. A little earlier in time, you can see here. This is my father and his father and they're here in the synagogue where his father was the cantor and also the teacher in the Jewish school. This was taken, I think, a few days before my dad left Germany to come to the United States. When he came here, he lived with a foster family in New Haven, Connecticut, and he received letters from his parents about once a week until one week, instead, he received a letter from the Red Cross informing him that his parents had been deported to the Litzmannstadt ghetto which was in Poland. And that was the last time he heard from them directly.

*(Changes the slide.)*

Okay. This is something I might use in the videotape actually. This is a letter that my father received in 1947, from a man who had been with his parents in the Litzmannstadt Ghetto. I had it translated and it says, *(as she reads she traces the lines with the laser pointer)* "Unfortunately, I must inform you that there is very little chance of your parents, with whom I was departed to Litzmanstadt, still being alive. Your parents were among the first transports sent to Auschwitz from the ghetto." *(She traces ahead with the*

*pointer.*) And then skipping down here a little... “I was a close friend of your parents and I know quite well how attached to you they were and how often you were talked about.” So, the other part of this trip was that we went to Auschwitz where neither one of us had ever been before. And the trip was extraordinary. It was so much *more* than either of us had imagined and when I returned I decided to make this video because my father has so many incredible stories and I wanted to make a record.

*(Changes the slide.)*

Okay. This is my Dutch “sister,” Elizabeth—Elizabeth Klip, who was an exchange student who lived with our family when I was in college. She’s extremely bright and so goodhearted, you know, and a little high-strung, I think you can see here, a little bit around the eyes. *(Says this last bit while indicating the eyes with the laser pointer.)* She’s completely devoted to my parents and she drove down from Holland to Germany to pick us up and take us to Auschwitz which is in Poland which was so great for us and a very nice vacation for her, too, as you can imagine.

*(Changes the slide.)*

Okay, this is my friend Mary who I asked to shoot this video for me. She’s a professional videographer. She’s done some wonderful pieces about her family and I asked her to accompany me and my girlfriend, my partner, Peg, to Lansing, Michigan, where I grew up, where my parents still live, to shoot some interviews with my dad and then also to accompany us along with my entire, extended Midwestern

family on our annual trip to the Cedar Point amusement park in Sandusky, Ohio, where my dad loves to ride the roller coasters, so we wanted to get that on tape as well, but anyway, here you can see Mary is in my mother's study, which is in the back hall of my parents' house, and here you can see she's showing me this little file cabinet of my mother's with all these little tiny drawers each meticulously labeled, and you can see here that she's pointing to this drawer marked "stamps" and she was showing me here how my mother has organized all of her postage stamps with these little handmade dividers by denomination. And she was saying to me here, "You know, your father's story is interesting but *this* would make a great video." My mother knows that everything has a purpose and throwing things away is a sin. She says, "You know, you all make fun of me for hanging on to everything but when someone needs something they always come to me." My father always says, "I don't know. I'd like to live in a stainless steel house with a drain in the middle."

*(Changes the slide.)*

Okay. Um. Okay, I don't know how this one got in here. This is Peg's family. This is from a huge family party that I went to at Peg's parents' house several years ago. It was incredible. There were hundreds of them, Healeys, Dohertys, Flahertys... They were all healthy and Irish and good looking. They all played sports all day. And at one point in the afternoon, another one of the in-laws asked me, "Does your family have parties like this?" And I said, "No, no. My family's all either dead or crippled."

*(Changes the slide.)*

Okay. This is something that I might also use in the video. This is my dad here in his office, you can see—we were taping some interviews here—and behind him you can see this watercolor portrait that was done of him when he was an American GI. I think he paid a German soldier something like three packs of cigarettes to paint this for him. It's really so beautiful. My dad was drafted by the American Army, after he managed to get himself declassified as an enemy alien, and then he was sent back to Germany where he worked as an army interrogator, questioning German... well, I was going to say POWs but they weren't really POWs. They were...arrestees, I guess you'd call them...or maybe detainees is a better word. *(Delighted with this stupid joke occurring to her.)* If they were "arrestees" I guess they'd be Greek.

*(Changes the slide.)*

Okay, this is my family—my mother's side of the family—the ones I actually know. And here you can see we're about to leave for Cedar Point—we're here in front of my cousins' house. There are about nine or ten of us who take this trip every year and when we do we separate out into three great big American-made cars. You can see here my parents' Mercury Marquis, and here's my cousins' Buick Skylark and here I think you can see just the corner of my brother's full-sized Ford Econoline van. Cedar Point is, I would say, about three, maybe three and a half hours from Lansing, and when we take this trip every year we set aside three whole days so that we have a full day at the park and

then an entire day for travel on either side. And during this epic cross-country trek these three vehicles remain in contact at all times with the use of—I think you can see a little bit here on my parents’ dashboard—walkie-talkies. I brought this picture because my mother says that I exaggerate when I talk about the family but, I mean, look at the pictures.

My mother is horrified at the prospect of people in her house with video cameras and she keeps bringing up that 1970s PBS series on the Loud Family. And on our second day in Michigan she takes all of us over to the Pilgrim House so that we can buy all new chairs for the living room. Now, my parents have been in a solidly upper middle-class tax bracket for at least thirty-five years but they’ve never owned a piece of furniture that wasn’t previously owned by someone else, but I think that it’s the threat of immortality by video that brings out in my mother an almost irresistible urge to redecorate. And we buy all this brand new furniture. And that night, after everyone else has gone to sleep, my mother and I stay up and push enormous pieces of furniture back and forth and back and forth around the living room floor. My mom has these incredible, inexplicable swings in physical ability. One second she can barely hobble from her La-Z-Boy to the bathroom and the next second she’s like Jack LaLanne pulling a sofa across the living room with a strap in her teeth.

I’m trying to remember how many times we actually went to Cedar Point as a family when I was growing up. It’s occurring to me that it’s one of those fake “traditions” my mother uses to get me to come home more often. Like how



she asks me every year, “Are you going to make it home for Christmas this year?” And I say, “I don’t come home for Christmas. Mom. I have never come home for Christmas. We are not Christians. Stop trying to trick me!”

*(Leaves the slide as she is overtaken by this next story. From this point on she will shift between story threads without pause or apology, each new thread overtaking her naturally, in the way consciousness jumps from one thing to another. For clarity, these shifts are notated here with asterisks.)*

Elizabeth drives like a demon over pitch-dark Polish roads. Dad sits in the back and tells us stories. I ask questions. I keep my voice firm. I keep my crying to myself.

“Were you looking for your parents?”

“No, I had done that the summer before.”

“And was it hard to accept it? Was it shocking?”

“No, I don’t think it was hard to accept it because I don’t think I did accept it. I knew but I think somewhere I thought maybe they were still alive. I don’t think I accepted it until a few years ago, in Lansing. It was the winter and it was so cold and I was shivering. In my coat. And I realized this would only happen to them once. They were old and they stood outside, lined up in the cold and they were of no use to anyone and they were killed.”

\*

At the entrance to the Magnum there are signs all over which say under no circumstances is this ride suitable for people who are elderly, diabetic, or have heart conditions. I look at my father. He can’t read the signs because, in addi-

tion to having all the conditions listed, he is also legally blind. I tell him what it says and I say, “Are you sure this is a good idea?” And he says, “I don’t have to do anything. All I have to do is sit there.” And then he pops a nitroglycerine in his mouth. “Well, then, why are you doing that?” I say. “Just in case.” I try to get him to pretend to take another one so that Mary can tape him doing it. This might make a very nice video moment. But he says no because he is worried that if the girls who run the rides see him taking a pill they won’t let him on.

\*

A horrible moment in the parking lot. We think they’re going to make us pay to go in. No way, no way, no way. In the car we don’t say anything to each other but it’s clear to all of us that we can’t pay an admission fee for Auschwitz. Oh. They’re only charging us for parking. Well. Okay.

\*

My brother is getting married. In Peg’s family when someone’s getting married, her parents say, “Oh, isn’t it exciting? They’re so in love.” In my family when someone’s getting married, my parents say, “Well, I hope they know what they’re doing. They seem to be crazy about each other.” My brother lived on the third floor of my parents’ house until a few years ago when my mother asked him to go live in the attic of my dead grandmother’s house. Peg and I had spent a month living in that house the summer after my grandmother died, about seven or eight years ago, to help my mom organize an estate sale. The house was packed, floor to ceiling with things. Like, there was a whole room full of Avon my grandmother had

bought because she felt sorry for the Avon lady. We tried to sell as much of her stuff as we could but there was just too much and there was the added problem of my mother's attitude. When someone would ask for a lower price on something, my mother would snatch the item out of their hands and say, "I know exactly how much my mother paid for this item twenty-five years ago and if you don't want it for that price I'll just keep it myself." So now, eight years later, the house is still full of this stuff although it has all been organized on the first floor on steel shelving along with the large collection of gay male pornography left by my grandmother's brother, my great-uncle Robert, who also lived in the house, who was a horribly twisted and bitter old closet case who never had a cheerful or generous word to say to anyone. His two most often used phrases, actually, were, "My God in heaven," and "99.9% of the people," which he would combine into sentences sometimes, such as, "My God in heaven! 99.9% of the people who go to that breakfast bar over at the Big Boy restaurant just shovel the food into their mouths! *They just shovel it in!*" The month we stayed in Lansing to help out we lived in the house with him. He refused to learn Peggy's name and referred to her only as, "That girl you people call Peggy!" Anyway, now my uncle is dead and my brother lives in the house so that my mother can keep it insured. Peg says that David better never get in trouble with the law because he lives like a serial killer. "I mean look at the facts," she says, "He lives in the attic of his dead grandmother's house filled with gay male pornography because his mother makes him."