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BEING SEEN

By

RICHARD GUSTIN

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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RICHARD GUSTIN

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(BEING SEEN)

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BEING SEEN received its world premiere through FringeNYC at 64E4 Underground in August 2015.

CAST:

THE ACTOR Allison Minick

THE DIRECTOR..... William Youmans

UNDERSTUDIES:

THE ACTOR Oakley Boycott

THE DIRECTOR..... Richard Gustin

PRODUCTION:

ProducerRG Productions

Director Mindy Cooper

Stage ManagerErnie Fimbres

Costume Designer..... Tristan Raines

Lighting Designer Zach Blane

Production Photographer Matthew Dunivan

The play went on to have a run at The Den Theatre (Chicago) in June 2023.

CAST:

THE ACTOR Kelly Anne Clark

THE DIRECTOR..... Will Clinger

UNDERSTUDIES:

THE ACTORGabrielle Johnsen

THE DIRECTOR..... Guy Wicke

PRODUCTION:

ProducerRG Productions

Director Richard Gustin

Stage ManagerLydia Goble LaGue

Costume Designer.....Rachel Lambert

Lighting Designer Gabe Gorsline
Social Media Designer Max McNeal Martin
Production Photographer Mike Martin

The play was subsequently produced at the OSO Arts Centre (London) in March 2025.

CAST:

THE ACTOR Kelly Anne Clark
THE DIRECTOR Will Clinger

UNDERSTUDIES:

THE ACTOR Serena Bunn
THE DIRECTOR Michael Stafford Wells

PRODUCTION:

Producer OSO Arts Centre/RG Productions
Director Richard Gustin
Stage Manager Lydia Goble LaGue
Costume Designer Rachel Lambert
Social Media Designer Atlie Gilbert

BEING SEEN

CHARACTERS

THE ACTOR (a): Filled with hope and promise. 20s–40s.

THE DIRECTOR (a): Filled with a finely tuned aesthetic.
40s–70s.

TIME: The present.

PLACE: A theatre. The stage is cleared except for one chair upstage. A broom is placed against a wall.

CASTING NOTE: While the play is written for actors of any gender, the original production had the ACTOR played by a woman and the DIRECTOR played by a man. You may adjust terms in accordance with your actor's identity.

INTERMISSION NOTE: *BEING SEEN* plays best without intermission, but if you must take an act break there is a suggested intermission break on page 46.

BEING SEEN

(Lights up. THE ACTOR is discovered onstage. THE DIRECTOR is seated in the audience, unseen by THE ACTOR due to the bright stage lights. THE ACTOR shimmers in anticipation.)

DIRECTOR. Closer.

(THE ACTOR takes two or three steps downstage. They smile trying to fill the moment with their presence and relaxation. They take a deep breath, smile again, adjust themselves ever so slightly, and then try not to smile, unsuccessfully.)

DIRECTOR *(cont'd)*. And?

(Beat.)

ACTOR. Hm? *(Smiles and steadies herself, giving a solid stare. Shields their eyes from the bright light and tries to relax.)* Oh. Uh, trained at High School of the Arts ... sorry. Can I start over? *(Smiles, takes a beat and speeds through their training credits.)* Uh, Manchester Rep. True rep, not the summer stock variety. Two years. Certificate. Classical training. Voice, movement, dialects, juggling, clowning. Alexander, Meisner, Stanislavsky naturally. Method—although what strain, never quite sure, is anyone really? Pinch of Hagen, Chekhov—action, reaction. Boal—very moving and important work there. Viewpoints—I love Bogart, who doesn't—neutral mask, flag waving, Suzuki, Grotowski ...

DIRECTOR. Really?

ACTOR. Yes.

DIRECTOR. Tell me about that.

ACTOR. Yes?

DIRECTOR. Grotowski.

ACTOR. Oh ...

DIRECTOR. The Pole?

ACTOR. Yes. Well, of course I didn't actually work with *him*.
(*Hushed.*) He's no longer with us.

DIRECTOR. Corporally.

ACTOR (*beat*). Yes. But I did work with a student from the
Grotowski "Laboratory."

DIRECTOR. Ah.

ACTOR. One of the core students.

DIRECTOR. Mm.

ACTOR. Well, not the actual student, a friend of the student—
the *wife* of one of the students.

(*Beat.*)

DIRECTOR. I see.

ACTOR. But she was good. Very good! People said she was
even better than her husband.

DIRECTOR. Why was that do you think?

ACTOR. I don't know. Greater objectivity?

DIRECTOR. From the work?

ACTOR (*gesturing*). Distance.

DIRECTOR. Hm.

ACTOR. From the work.

DIRECTOR. Yes.

ACTOR. Sometimes we can get too close.

DIRECTOR. Hm.

ACTOR. Can't see the forest ...

DIRECTOR. For the trees.

ACTOR. Hm. Perhaps. That may happen sometimes.

DIRECTOR. Yes. *(Beat.)* Tell me about that.

ACTOR. Uh ...

DIRECTOR. An exercise.

ACTOR. Oh. Well, OK. Uh, let's see. A Grotowski exercise?

DIRECTOR. Yes.

ACTOR. Right. Well ... one afternoon, the class—

DIRECTOR. As a group?

ACTOR. Yes. The class went on a little field trip, I guess you could call it. That's what she called it.

DIRECTOR. The student's teacher-wife?

ACTOR. Uh-huh.

(Beat.)

DIRECTOR. Go on.

ACTOR. It was a bright, cold morning in November. There were a lot of cold mornings in Wroclaw. Well, we weren't actually *in* Wroclaw—outside of the city, rural area, farming community. Looked like the Midwest actually, Wisconsin, Indiana—flat, cows, some trees. Anyway, that morning we went out as a group for a walk in the woods. Quite far into the woods, remote, no one around FOREVER. And it was *cold*. None of us had dressed for a hike, we were told we were going for a walk.

(THE ACTOR stops their story suddenly with a catch of breath.

Beat.)

DIRECTOR. And?

ACTOR. Yes.

DIRECTOR. Something the matter?

ACTOR. Well, it's just that ...

DIRECTOR. Yes?

ACTOR (*confidentially*). We ... uh ... weren't supposed to talk about it.

DIRECTOR. Really?

ACTOR. Yes. I'm sorry.

(*THE ACTOR squeezes a smile between their teeth.*)

DIRECTOR. Truly?

ACTOR. We were sworn to secrecy.

(*Beat.*)

DIRECTOR. Hm.

ACTOR. I know. Right?

DIRECTOR. And why was that?

(*Beat.*)

ACTOR. Robs the power.

DIRECTOR. The power?

ACTOR. Yes. The essence. (*Beat.*) She made us swear. Otherwise, we were going to be left out there in the middle of *nowhere*. In the woods, outside of Wroclaw, no phone, freezing cold, *and* it was starting to snow—not the big flakes, you know, when it's warm outside, but the stinging pellets variety. I mean, no one was dressed for it. (*Beat.*) We were told that we were going to a party.

DIRECTOR. A party?

ACTOR. Yes. *(Beat.)* And that there would be games. *(Smiles weakly, eyes widening in remembrance.)* And treats.

DIRECTOR. Treats.

ACTOR *(holding back deep emotion)*. Yes.

DIRECTOR. And were there treats?

ACTOR *(this is hard for them)*. No. *(Beat.)* There weren't.

DIRECTOR. I see.

ACTOR. You do?

DIRECTOR. I think so. Yes.

ACTOR *(hopeful)*. Really?

DIRECTOR. Yes.

(Beat.)

ACTOR *(with great sincerity)*. Thank you for that. *(Beat.)*
That helps.

(THE ACTOR adjusts their stance, smiles, relaxes their gaze and stares into the darkness.)

DIRECTOR. And you can't tell me anything else?

ACTOR *(shielding their eyes)*. I don't think I should. Do you?

DIRECTOR. Well ...

ACTOR. I mean, I gave them my word. There were witnesses.

DIRECTOR. I see ...

ACTOR. It just wouldn't ...

DIRECTOR. Feel right.

ACTOR. No.

DIRECTOR. It wouldn't?

ACTOR. No. *(Pause.)* I'm sure you can understand that.

(Silence.)

DIRECTOR *(abruptly)*. Height?

ACTOR. Five, seven.

DIRECTOR. Bust?

ACTOR *(trying not to take offense)*. Thirty-six.

DIRECTOR. Shoe?

ACTOR. Size seven.

DIRECTOR *(greatly disappointed)*. Oh. I see.

(Beat.)

ACTOR. But I can fit into a size six!

DIRECTOR. Uh-huh.

(The air is fraught with tension.)

DIRECTOR *(cont'd)*. We were looking for a size eight.

ACTOR. I can do that!

DIRECTOR. You can?

ACTOR. Absolutely.

DIRECTOR. You're sure?

ACTOR. Yes! We were on tour last year and the women's shoes were misplaced—on another truck—one truck went to Kansas and the other went to Missouri. My shoes were on the truck to Kansas, so I borrowed an extra pair of men's shoes from a very nice, young, *(Smiling at the memory.)* good-looking actor from Montana that night, for the week actually, and they were SIZE NINE!

DIRECTOR. They were?

ACTOR. Absolutely. I cut up some of my padded bra, crammed it into the toes, and I was GOLD.

DIRECTOR. You were.

ACTOR. SOLID GOLD. In fact, when we caught up with the other truck the next week and my dresser brought in my misplaced pair of shoes, I told her that I didn't even want them anymore. I had adjusted. I had made the *adjustment*. I tried on those size sevens, and you know what? They actually felt *weird*. I sent them back. I was doing better work in the size nines. Absolutely. Got comments in the dressing room from the other actors: "You are killing it. You are on *fire*. Your scenes have never been better!" And you know what I said? "It's the shoes. Seriously, it's the SHOES!" I adjusted. I said, "I'm comfortable. Maybe for the first time on tour. I'm finally comfortable." I now do my best work in size nines. (*Beat.*) Ensemble. Making it work. Adjusting. I am *all* about that. Really.

DIRECTOR. Down right.

(THE ACTOR starts an incredibly focused and committed DL cross and, realizing their error, instantly shifts to DR. Move completed; they smile triumphantly.

Beat.)

DIRECTOR (*cont'd*). Up center.

(THE ACTOR crosses UC more slowly and deliberately than their previous cross, head over shoulder looking back. They hit C and turn in an elegant manner to face the house, cocking their head with a bemused smile.)

DIRECTOR (*cont'd*). Downstage.

ACTOR (*delighted*). Center?

DIRECTOR. Is there any other place you'd rather be?

ACTOR (*smiling*). Of course not. Thank you.

(THE ACTOR throws their head back and boldly crosses DC, eyes flashing.)

DIRECTOR. Turn.

(THE ACTOR makes a slow, full turn and then decides to add another quick turn in a pirouette.)

DIRECTOR *(cont'd)*. How did that feel?

ACTOR. Good. Very good, I think. Yes, quite. Thank you for the opportunity.

(Beat.)

DIRECTOR. Anything else?

ACTOR. I'm sorry?

DIRECTOR. To share.

ACTOR. Yes, oh yes. *Obviously*, yes. I mean, I hope so. I certainly hope so.

(Beat.)

DIRECTOR. It's just ...

ACTOR *(expectantly)*. Yes?

DIRECTOR. Grotowski.

ACTOR. Yes.

DIRECTOR. The *Pole*.

ACTOR. Yes, well ...

DIRECTOR. Yes?

ACTOR. As I've said ...

DIRECTOR. Yes, as you've said.

ACTOR. I can't ...

DIRECTOR. You can't?

ACTOR. I can't—

DIRECTOR. Yes, but that was before ...

ACTOR. Before?

DIRECTOR. That was before ... we got to know one another—

(Beat.) Better.

ACTOR. Yes, well—

DIRECTOR. And that was before ...

ACTOR. Before ... ?

DIRECTOR. You performed that magnificent cross.

ACTOR. You thought ... ?

DIRECTOR. Yes ...

ACTOR. That ... ?

DIRECTOR. Yes ...

ACTOR. It wasn't ... ?

DIRECTOR. No ...

ACTOR. Even though ... ?

DIRECTOR. Even *though*.

(Beat.)

ACTOR *(overwhelmed)*. Thank you. That means a great deal to me. Personally.

(Beat.)

DIRECTOR *(expectantly)*. So.

(Beat.)

ACTOR. I feel, well, frankly, awkward saying this, but they forbade me to say anything. I've probably said too much already. They made me promise. Threatened to have my visa pulled.

DIRECTOR. If you told.

ACTOR. Yes.

DIRECTOR. Your visa.

ACTOR. Yes.

DIRECTOR. If you talked about it.

ACTOR. Yes.

DIRECTOR. I see.

(Beat.

THE ACTOR smiles painfully.)

DIRECTOR *(cont'd)*. Twelve times fifty-six.

ACTOR. Sorry?

DIRECTOR. Twelve times fifty-six.

ACTOR *(without hesitation, effortlessly)*. 672.

DIRECTOR. 130 times 561.

ACTOR *(again without hesitation, effortlessly)*. 72,930.

DIRECTOR. 1,031 times 2,969 plus ten.

ACTOR *(again effortlessly without hesitation)*. 3,061,048.
(They have a momentary brain glitch.) I mean, 3,061,049.
Which is *prime*.

(Beat.)

DIRECTOR. Had some trouble with that last one, did we?

ACTOR. A bit, yes. Primes can be tricky.

DIRECTOR. Can they?

ACTOR. Elegant, but a bit slippery. Yes. *(Laughs awkwardly.)*

DIRECTOR. Even so, impressive.

ACTOR. I have a certain ... talent for figures.

DIRECTOR *(double-entendre)*. You certainly do.

(THE ACTOR blushes at the compliment, and then is uncertain whether it was in fact a compliment or not. They decide it was a compliment. Perhaps.)

DIRECTOR *(cont'd)*. And your father?

ACTOR *(shielding their eyes against the lights)*. My father?

DIRECTOR. Yes.

ACTOR. What would you like to know?

DIRECTOR. Whatever you want to tell me.

ACTOR. Oh.

DIRECTOR. Is he “in the theatre”?

ACTOR. No. No, he’s not. He’s ... *(Emotionally moved.)* I’m sorry, can we stop?

DIRECTOR. Do you want to stop?

ACTOR. I think so, yes. Please. I’d like to take a short break if that’s possible. Would that be all right?

DIRECTOR. Do you think that would be a good idea?

ACTOR. I think so, yes. *(Beat.)* If that’s all right. Unless it’s part of the process! I mean, I can understand if it’s part of the process. Is it part of the process?

(THE ACTOR peers into the darkness.)

DIRECTOR. Move on to the joke.

ACTOR *(without hesitation, in their best Mae West impression, complete with “cigarette” in hand)*. How are men like linoleum floors?

DIRECTOR. I don’t know. How?

ACTOR. You lay ’em right, and you can walk all over ’em for years.

(THE ACTOR takes a puff from their imaginary cigarette and smiles.)