

Excerpt terms and conditions

This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest you read the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

BEING SEEN

By
RICHARD GUSTIN

Dramatic Publishing Company
Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. Current royalty rates, applications and restrictions may be found at our website: www.dramaticpublishing.com, or we may be contacted by mail at: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., 311 Washington St., Woodstock, IL 60098.

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including, but not limited to, the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication and reading, are reserved.

For performance of any songs, music and recordings mentioned in this play that are in copyright, the permission of the copyright owners must be obtained or other songs and recordings in the public domain substituted.

©MMXXVI by
RICHARD GUSTIN

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(BEING SEEN)

ISBN: 978-1-61959-361-9

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the play *must* give credit to the author of the play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a production. The name of the author *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent (50%) the size of the title type. Biographical information on the author, if included in the playbook, may be used in all programs. *In all programs this notice must appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, INC., of Woodstock, Illinois.”

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:

Producer RG Productions
Director Mindy Cooper
Stage Manager Ernie 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 ACTOR Gabrielle Johnsen
THE DIRECTOR Guy Wicke

PRODUCTION:

Producer RG Productions
Director Richard Gustin
Stage Manager Lydia 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 themself ever so slightly, and then try not to smile, unsuccessfully.)

DIRECTOR (*cont'd*). And?

(Beat.)

ACTOR. Hm? *(Smiles and steadies themself, 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.)