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Dramatic Publishing

Kong's Night Out

Comedy by Jack Neary



Kong's Night Out

Comedy. By Jack Neary. Cast: 5m., 4w. This is the story of what happened in the hotel room next to the hotel room where Ann (played in the 1933 movie by Fay Wray) was whisked out of bed and into the Manhattan night by King Kong. There's always a backstory. Myron Siegel is a low-end Broadway producer who desperately wants to be high end. Trouble is, he has, for his entire career, been sabotaged by his arch rival, who is ultra-famous for making movies about scary jungle creatures. That producer's father and Myron's father were also rivals back in the day, and the legacy has lived on. As the play opens, Myron has just learned that the rival producer has booked a theatre directly across from the theatre where Myron's potential bonanza, *Foxy Felicia*, is about to open. Nobody on the rialto knows what he's up to, but it's big. It's BIG! Myron gathers his entourage—his sassy mother, his gangster henchman, his Hungarian backer and his wide-eyed niece straight off the bus from Buffalo—and concocts a plan to find out what the mystery show is all about. What he discovers is that the show is about a monkey. A very large monkey. He also learns that the rival is sleeping with his wife and plans to steal both her and *Foxy Felicia* away from Myron. As the story unfolds, the seven doors on the set fly open and slam shut constantly. There are also mistaken identity, pies in the face, deceit, underhandedness and even a couple of romances. And every moment is meticulously coordinated with the events depicted in the 1933 movie. *Unit set.* *Approximate running time: 1 hour, 40 minutes. Code: K44.*

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By

JACK NEARY



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In its developmental stages, *Kong's Night Out* was ...

Originally produced by the Lyric Stage Company of Boston: Spiro Veloudos, producing artistic director; Rebecca Low Curtiss, Growing Voices program. The production featured Larry Coen, Ellen Colton, Lordan Napoli, Rachel Harker, Steve Gagliastro, Christopher Loftus, M.C.C. Cashman, Timothy John Smith and Sarah Abrams. Directed by Spiro Veloudos.

Produced by New Century Theatre in association with Smith College, Northampton, Mass.: Sam Rush, producing director. The production featured Brian Smith, Ellen Colton, Lordan Napoli, Phil Kilbourne, David Mason, Buzz Roddy, Lisa Abend, Mark Leahy and Katrina Ylimaki. Directed by Jack Neary.

Produced by Meadow Brook Theatre, Rochester Hills, Mich.: Travis Walter, artistic director; Cheryl L. Marshall, managing director. The production featured Cindy Williams, Eddie Mekka, Christopher Howe, Kady Zadora, Christo Savalas, Teri Clark Linden, Katie Nabors, Wayne David Parker and Rusty Mewha. Directed by Jack Neary.

The author would like to thank Michael Dell'Orto for his invaluable contribution to the project in its early stages.

Kong's Night Out

CHARACTERS

WALTER WINCHELL (V.O.)
MYRON SIEGEL
SALLY CHARMAINE
DAISY
LITTLE WILLIE
BERTRILLE SIEGEL
SIG HIGGINBOTTOM
ANN FARROW
CARL DENNAM
JACK DRISKEL
COMMERCIAL ANNOUNCER (V.O.)
SHAMROCK SINGERS (V.O.)
RADIO ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

Dedicated to the memory of my friend, Phil Kilbourne.

Kong's Night Out

ACT I

SCENE 1

AT RISE: *In the darkness, we hear jazzy 30s music, which segues into the radio voice of WALTER WINCHELL (V.O.).*

WINCHELL. Good evening Mr. and Mrs. America and all the ships at sea! This is Walter Winchell with news from the Great White Way, where producer Myron Siegel's splashy, flashy new musical *Foxy Felicia* is about to open at the Regency Theatre! A return to Broadway has been Siegel's goal ever since he went broke with his ill-fated production of *Coo Coo Ca Choo* four years ago. But now he's battled back, and with the New York opening tonight of *Foxy Felicia*, I can't imagine anything that could possibly stand in his way!

(In the dark, there is more music. Then, a mammoth gorilla roar ... and then ...

Lights up on a large, attractive suite in a midtown Manhattan hotel at about 5:00 p.m. on an October afternoon in 1933. There's a bar, phone and radio. There are also a number of doors to three bedrooms, a den, a bathroom and a main door. There are French doors and a large window to a balcony, all of which overlook Broadway south of 42nd Street. At the moment, the room is empty and dark. The lights of Broadway and environs stream through the windows, as do the sounds of the Gotham streets.

Abruptly, the main door opens. MYRON SIEGEL bursts inside and flips on the lights. MYRON is in his 40s, energized and driven. He is dressed to the nines—top hat, tails, the works. He flings his hat on the sofa as he assaults the telephone.)

MYRON (*entering*). I knew it. I knew it. I knew it. I knew it. I knew it! (*Lifts receiver and slaps the bar energetically.*)

(SALLY CHARMAINE enters. She is MYRON's mother, blunt and brash. She appears to have started smoking in the womb. She, too, is dressed to the hilt.)

SALLY (*looking back out the door*). He knew it! (*Goes directly to the bar and makes a drink.*)

MYRON. I knew it!

SALLY. I heard.

MYRON (*into the phone*). Get me the Alhambra Theatre, please! ... Backstage! (*To SALLY.*) I told you, I told Bertille, I told anybody who'd listen to me. Carl Dennam was gonna sabotage my opening! I knew it!

(Meanwhile, DAISY has entered. She is a cute brunette in her 20s. She is bug-eyed and in general awe of everything, as if she just got off the bus from Buffalo. This is because she just got off the bus from Buffalo. She carries a dilapidated suitcase.)

DAISY (*surveys the room*). Boy oh boy! This is big!

SALLY (*to DAISY*). Didja hear? He knew it. (*Drinks.*)

DAISY. Like a liberry or somethin'!

SALLY. Daisy, take a load off. You've had a long trip.

DAISY. I never seen so many doors! Do they all really go someplace?

SALLY. Sit!

DAISY. I can't sit! Once I got off that bus, I told myself I'd never sit again!

MYRON (*into phone*). Hello! I wanna talk to Carl Dennam!

DAISY. You could have a funeral in here!

MYRON (*into phone*). Never mind who this is!

DAISY. You know, for like the Pope ... or Hoot Gibson!
(*Continues to check out the room.*)

MYRON. Carl Dennam!

SALLY (*aimed at MYRON*). Twenty-one thousand, six hundred thirty-seven dollars ...

MYRON. Shut up, Ma!

SALLY. And forty-two cents.

MYRON (*into phone*). What? ... Whatdya mean he's indisposed? ... What? ... Of course I know what indisposed means!
(*Covers phone, to SALLY.*) What does "indisposed" mean?

SALLY. I left my dictionary at the Stork Club.

DAISY (*points at SALLY*). Ha! Good one, Grandma!

SALLY (*to DAISY*). Don't call me Grandma! (*To MYRON.*)
My life savings. Big show, he says.

MYRON (*into phone*). I don't care!

SALLY. Can't miss, he says. Twenty-one thousand, six hundred thirty-seven dollars ...

MYRON (*into phone*). Just find him!

SALLY. And forty-two cents.

MYRON. MA!

SALLY. I thought Dennam was out of town!

MYRON. He WAS out of town! He came back! It's like he picks up my scent!

SALLY. I didn't know you could smell mediocrity.

MYRON (*with a dismissive gesture, it saves time*). Ehhh!

SALLY. Just like your father!

MYRON (*into phone*). What? ... Look, put Dennam on the phone! ... Why? You wanna know why? All right. All right. I'll tell you why ... Because I'm Myron Siegel, that's why! Whatyda say about that! ... Hello?! ... Hello?! (*Slams down receiver*.) Ehhh!

SALLY. How many times do I hafta tell ya, Myron, you don't have a name that keeps the conversation goin'.

(*MYRON moves grumpily to the French doors. The main door flies open, and LITTLE WILLIE enters. He's a thug, but he is dressed a little too nattily. Not everything works sartorially. MYRON opens the French doors and looks outside.*)

WILLIE. Boss, I got your message! Hi, Sally!

(*SALLY just grunts and goes to the bar.*)

MYRON. What took you so long?

WILLIE. The cabbie had the audacity to sneer at my tip. (*Shows brass knuckles, which he immediately pockets.*) I felt compelled to rebut.

SALLY. Rebut?

WILLIE. I learn a new word every day. That was Tuesday's. With a good vocabulary, I make the world a better place.

SALLY. You wanna make the world a better place?

WILLIE. I do.

SALLY. Get a new tailor.

MYRON (*looking down the street*). Look at that! Lined up around the block at the Alhambra, empty sidewalk at the Regency.

WILLIE (*sees DAISY, likes what he sees*). Hello, there.

DAISY (*likes what she sees*). Hello, there.

WILLIE. They call me Little Willie.

DAISY (*still smiling*). Why?

MYRON (*back into the room*). Don't talk to him!

SALLY. Don't talk to him!

MYRON (to WILLIE). Don't talk to her!

SALLY. Don't talk to her!

DAISY. Where's the privy, Uncle Myron?

MYRON. The what?

DAISY. Privy. We don't say bathroom in Buffalo.

WILLIE. That is very ... genteel ... of you.

DAISY (beat). Well, my father is a Catholic.

SALLY (points). That door, honey.

DAISY (heads to door). Aw, this place is great! Ga-reat!!!
(Enters the bathroom and shuts the door.)

MYRON (to WILLIE). What do you hear about Carl Dennam? What's he up to makes everybody in town wanna see this show of his?

WILLIE. Nobody knows! That's the thing! It's the element of the ... unknownness of the enterprise makes us all, you know ... fraught.

SALLY (fraught). Fraught? What's fraught?

WILLIE. You know. Like you. All the time.

MYRON. It'll never stop! Ever since *Bovine Ballyhoo* of 1922. Remember, Ma? Remember what Dennam did then?

SALLY. Of course I remember! There's nothin' hard about my arteries!

WILLIE. *Bovine Ballyhoo*?

MYRON. I put together a spectacular revue featuring the greatest overweight tap dancers in the country. (Wistfully.) What a cast I put together! Total weight first day of rehearsal was 7,694 pounds. Dennam found out about the show, set up a free buffet in an empty storefront across the street from the theatre the morning of opening night. Had a color poster of a big knockwurst in the window. Not one of my tappers walked past that knockwurst on the way

to work without stopping in. That night, third chorus of "Alabany Bound," all my guys hit the down left platform at once, the platform collapses, they all end up in the pit. Nate Birnbaum, five eight, 325, went right through the kettle drum and tore his trapezius.

WILLIE. His what?

MYRON. It's a very important muscle. I don't wanna talk about it.

(WILLIE makes a note.)

MYRON *(cont'd)*. Next day, the buffet's gone, Dennam's gone, *Bovine Ballyhoo* is closed, I'm broke and 20 of the most graceful tappin' fat guys ever assembled are out of work. Same thing with *The Big Soak* of '26.

WILLIE. *The Big Soak*?

SALLY. A water ballet.

MYRON. Classiest thing you ever seen in a theatre. Fifty beautiful girls in bathing suits, Irving Berlin tunes, three swimming pools, diving boards ... *(Gestures wistfully, remembering the girls.)* ... bouncy diving boards ... orchestra pit filled to the brim with water ... *(Moved.)* ... musicians in little boats. I'm weeping just thinking of it.

SALLY. There was a lot of weeping, trust me.

MYRON. Week before we open, Dennam books the theatre next door to *The Big Soak* for a new play—a sequel to *Ben-Hur*.

WILLIE. A sequel to *Ben-Hur*?

SALLY. *Ben-Him*.

MYRON. We didn't stand a chance.

WILLIE. Boy oh boy ...

SALLY. *Coo Coo Ca Choo!*

MYRON. No. I can't talk about *Coo Coo Ca Choo*.

WILLIE. Come on, boss.

MYRON. No.

SALLY. Tell 'im.

MYRON. No!

SALLY. Tell 'im.

MYRON. No!!

SALLY. Tell 'im.

MYRON. Homing pigeons! I found a guy had homing pigeons would fly anyplace and back, on a cue from a bassoon! It was colossal! My writer wrote a story about this accused murderer whose pigeons fly away at intermission, and come back at the climax with a note from the governor in the lead pigeon's beak just in time to save this guy from the electric chair!

WILLIE. What happened?

SALLY. Opening night Dennam steals the bassoon.

MYRON. We tried everything. Oboe. Trombone. French horn. Nothing.

SALLY. Lousy birds stayed offstage. Wouldn't work without the bassoon.

MYRON. Goddamn union pigeons!

SALLY. Myron! Relax! You'll live longer!

MYRON. What, that's supposed to be a good thing?

WILLIE. But why? Why does Dennam do this to you?

MYRON. Aw, he's just jealous! His old man was the same way! His old man was a producer just like my old man! And every time Pop came close to bringing a hit show to Broadway, Dennam's old man shot him down by producing something bigger himself at the same time! He lived to step all over my old man! Just like Dennam Jr. lives to step all over me!

WILLIE. Boss ... I am ... empathetic.

MYRON (*beat*). Don't tell me your troubles! (*Grabs a newspaper.*) What about this dame, this Ann Farrow?

SALLY. Who?

MYRON. Says right here ... (*Reads.*) "The only tidbit of information Dennam would reveal to scribes is that this new show features the New York stage debut of a smashing new actress, Ann Farrow."

WILLIE. Oh, yeah! There's been a modicum of discussion.

MYRON. So? What's the word on the street about her?

WILLIE. The little I could get was Dennam dragged her out of a roomin' house and took her off with him on a voyage.

MYRON. Voyage? What kind of voyage?

WILLIE. You know ... (*With great meaning.*) A voyage! I understand it involves a boat. They get back, boom, she's the toast of Broadway.

MYRON. Just for gettin' on a boat with Dennam?

SALLY. She must have really known how to shiver his timbers.

MYRON. Shut up, Ma!

WILLIE. Boss, I never seen you this upset before.

MYRON. It was never 1933 before! I was never up to my ass in debt before! I never had a show that was guaranteed to keep me out of the poorhouse before! *Foxy Felicia*! What a story! What a score! And more dames than ... than ... sticks that you ... shake! Now it's all going in the hopper!

SALLY. Along with my twenty-one thous ...

MYRON. Shut up, Ma!

WILLIE. Aw, come on, boss! It's only one little show.

MYRON. One little show? Willie, let me ask you this. If you went to the box office today, as I did, and asked about the advance on tonight's opening, as I did, and learned, as I did, that because of Dennam's surprise show opening directly across the street from *Foxy Felicia*, because of that show, over 70 percent of our audience canceled, and proceeded across that street to purchase tickets for Dennam's opening, if you found all that out today, as I did, what would you do?

SALLY. I'd shit my pants.

MYRON. As I did!

DAISY (*has re-entered. Goes to her suitcase*). Whoa! Shit!

There's somethin' you don't hear in Buffalo!

MYRON (*to the heavens*). Why me?

DAISY. Shit! That is so great! (*To SALLY as she lifts her suitcase.*) Where's my room, Grandma?

SALLY. I told you ... I ain't your Grandma!

DAISY. You ain't?

SALLY. Not in Manhattan, I ain't!

WILLIE. I think Sally means that, uh, in the present circumstance, she wishes to keep her relationship with you ... clandestine.

DAISY. Clandestine?

WILLIE. Furtive. Impenetrable. Like that.

DAISY (*to SALLY*). You want me to be ... impenetrable?

MYRON (*hasn't really been listening, but is now*). Yes! At least till you get back to Buffalo!

SALLY. I may be your mother's mother, but I'm nobody's grandma! Call me Sally.

DAISY. Sally! That is great!

SALLY (*points*). Take that room. There's a nice view of the Automat.

DAISY. Hot dog! (*Goes to the bedroom door and stops.*) Oh!

Uncle Myron, I have a letter in my suitcase Ma wanted me to give you. (*Gets an envelope from her bag.*)

MYRON. Later, kid. I got a lot on my mind. (*Plops on the sofa and holds his head.*)

DAISY. Oh. OK. I'll just leave it here on the fruit. (*She tucks it into a fruit bowl, steps quietly over to MYRON then blasts in his ear.*) ARE YOU THINKIN' ABOUT SHOW BUSINESS?

MYRON (*startled then relaxes*). Yeah. Show business.

DAISY. HOT DOG! (*She enters her bedroom and slams the door closed.*)

WILLIE. Hey, boss, who's the little cutie?

MYRON. My sister's kid. Daisy. She wants to be an actress.

I'm supposed to set her straight and send her back home.

My luck, she decides to land here today!

WILLIE. She's somewhat enchantin'.

MYRON. You keep away from her!

SALLY. Yeah! Hands off!

MYRON. She ain't been ... indoctrinated!

WILLIE. Oh. (*Beat.*) I don't think I even have to look that up.

MYRON. Stay away!

SALLY. Have you told your loving wife about her yet?

MYRON. No. She don't even know I have a niece. But she'll be fine. Bertrille is very family oriented.

SALLY (*nudges WILLIE*). Yeah. Like the Borgias.

MYRON. Shut up, Ma. Willie ... think! We gotta do something about Dennam!

WILLIE. But, boss, you got a big musical show with dames and legs and scenery and ... dames! Dennam probably just has another one of his home movies about animals.

MYRON. If you'd read a paper, you'd know that whatever Dennam's got, it ain't no home movie! (*Back to newspaper.*) Look ... "DENNAM'S STUNNING SURPRISE." Listen to this ... (*Reads.*) "Carl Dennam has a secret, and he's not telling. The famed nature picture maker has kept a tight lid on his new production at the Alhambra, but says that the audience will see something spectacular, something mind-boggling. Dennam says the show will be the biggest hit in Broadway history!"

WILLIE. But, boss, how did this happen? I thought the Gershwin show was goin' into the Alhambra.

MYRON. Dennam wanted it, Dennam got it.