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Dramatic Publishing

Carrying On



By
Harry Michael Bagdasian

Carrying On

Drama/Comedy. By Harry Michael Bagdasian. *Cast: 3m., 3w.* In 1964, his family and friends in rural Edgewater, Maryland, dismiss 20-year-old Davey Woodfield as borderline retarded. Davey may be a little "slow," but he's a genius with automobiles. He is resilient and he believes in himself. Davey is very frustrated with people's misperception of him and with being oppressed by his guardian, his Aunt Augusta. He wants to take his savings, leave this small town auto repair shop and move to the city, where he is positive that he will be well paid for his talents. On this particular afternoon, however, he finds that his boss has sold the repair shop, taken all of the money (supposedly including Davey's money in the "payroll savings plan") and left for Alaska. The situation is complicated by family politics and Davey's domineering Aunt Augusta. Then a customer arrives at the shop. Who would have thought that Davey's savior would be a cosmetics saleswoman with a broken-down VW Beetle? *Unit set. Approximate running time: 45 minutes. Code: CP9.*

*Cover: Eclectic Company Theatre, Los Angeles, featuring (l-r) Carrisa Gipprich, Jennifer Bailey and Elliott Davis. Photo: David Nott.
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Carrying On

A one-act play by

HARRY MICHAEL BAGDASIAN



Dramatic Publishing Company

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(CARRYING ON)

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Carrying On received its first workshop/development reading in 1985 at the New Playwrights Theatre, Washington, D.C., with the title *Making Choices*. It was directed by Mary Ann Nichols, and the script was read by Michael Willis, Ruth Waalkes-Meier, Lynnne Raybuck, Barbara Rappaport, Ruth Pritchard, Ernie Meier and Porter Kootz.

Carrying On was produced in March 2003 by the Henrico Theatre Company, Richmond, Va., having won the second place award in their annual one-act play competition. The play was directed by Stephen Seals and featured a cast that included Tina Brown, Michael Creamer, Robert Fisher, Marcia Quick, Shannon Ryan and Bill Stewart.

The play was later produced in 2005 by Cedar Lane Stage in Bethesda, Md., directed by David Paglin. The cast included Paul Boymel, David Paglin, Amy Purves, Nola Steinberg, John Tucker and Amanda Zantal-Weiner.

Carrying On was produced in July 2013 by The Eclectic Company Theatre in Los Angeles in their 10th annual Hurricane Season, a new works festival and playwriting competition. The production was produced by Taylor Ashbrook, Meghan McConnell, Timothy Sprague and Biff Wiff.

CAST

Davey Woodfield.....	Elliott Davis
Aubrey Willis.....	Steve Gustafson
Aunt Augusta	Perry Smith
Cynthia.....	Carissa Gipprich
Janie	Jennifer Bailey
Phil Larson.....	Mason Hallberg

PRODUCTION STAFF

Director	Kerr Lordygan
Assistant Director.....	Lauren Berman
Sound design.....	Timothy Sprague
Lighting and set design.....	John Dickey
Stage Manager	Jennifer Salas

Carrying On

CHARACTERS

DAVEY WOODFIELD: 21, a mechanic.

AUBREY WILLIS: 53, a local.

AUGUSTA WOODFIELD: 53, Davey's aunt and guardian.

CYNTHIA: 23, cosmetics saleswoman.

JANIE: 23, Davey's cousin.

PHIL LARSON: 30, another mechanic.

SETTING

Johnson's Auto Repair Shop along Mayo Road in Edgewater, Maryland.

The play has been performed on a nearly bare stage with a few props and a few dusty pieces of furniture. It has also been performed with a full set. The story will unfold well in either type of environment. If time and budget allow, the author envisions the following:

Basically, Johnson's Auto Repair Shop is a big, two-car garage. The corner of this old wooden structure is "the office." There is a dirty, old, wooden desk with a crank-handled adding machine and cash drawer, a couple of grimy chairs and a well-abused wooden filing cabinet. The workbench and tool racks are orderly and neatly kept. There is no car in the workspace during the time of the play's action, just a small tarp spread on the floor on which there are several carburetor parts and a bucket of gasoline. There is an old, but still operating, Canada Dry club soda machine (10 cents), a dust-covered clock with a Purolator Filters logo on the face and a large tin Nehi soda sign that is also a thermometer.

TIME

It is shortly after noon on a Friday afternoon in May 1964.

Carrying On

AT RISE: AUBREY WILLIS enters, a middle-aged gentleman who has a “country lawyer” look about him. His gabardine trousers, supported by wide suspenders, hang a little loose on his portly frame, and his narrow, pointed nose supports wire-rimmed glasses, which give him a scholarly look.

WILLIS is followed by DAVEY WOODFIELD, slightly dim-witted, barely 21 years old; dressed in a pair of grease-stained coveralls with the name “Dave” stitched on the breast pocket. DAVEY is slightly chubby but not fat, has shaggy brown hair and sports eyeglasses thick as Coke bottles in heavy black frames.

WILLIS. Dexterity. That’s what they call it, Davey, dexterity. I believe you’ve got a gift.

DAVEY. Thank you, Mr. Willis. (*Takes a seat at the desk and totals the repair ticket on the adding machine.*)

WILLIS. That old Pontiac never rode better. Purred right up Sherbet’s hill in second gear, didn’t it? Yes, sir, we’re lucky to have you around here.

DAVEY (*almost sheepishly*). I’m lucky to have a chance to work on your car. It’s the first transmission job I’ve done on my own.

WILLIS. That a fact?

DAVEY. Yes, sir.

WILLIS. I would never have known that, son. You did real fine.

DAVEY. Well, I been watching Frank real close, you know—learned a lot from him, and been studying. He called this my first “solo flight.” He’ll be glad to hear everything turned out all right.

WILLIS. I'll make sure he hears about it. You've turned out to be a natural with automobiles, haven't you?

DAVEY. Ya think so?

WILLIS. So it appears.

DAVEY. I'm just glad to have the job, ya know? It took me two months to talk Aunt Augusta and Uncle Ray into letting me work here. They thought I couldn't handle it.

WILLIS. Pegged you wrong, didn't they?

DAVEY. They never think I can handle anything. They get an idea in their heads and there's no changin' their minds. Here's the ticket.

(The telephone rings. DAVEY ignores it.)

WILLIS. \$98.00 even.

DAVEY. It's all there—parts and labor.

WILLIS. A fair price to pay to have that car back on the road.

(The telephone continues to ring.)

WILLIS (*cont'd*). Aren't you going to answer that telephone there, Davey?

DAVEY. It's probably Mrs. Johnson looking for Frank again. She's been calling over and over and over. Guess he ain't been home yet.

WILLIS. It's only polite to answer a ringing phone, son.

DAVEY. Yes, sir. (*Answers the phone.*) Johnson's Auto Repair Shop ... No, ma'am, he's not called in either. He said late this after ... Yes, ma'am, I'll make sure he calls home ... Yes, ma'am.

(DAVEY looks to WILLIS, their eyes meet and he nods approvingly at the boy as DAVEY continues.)

DAVEY (*cont'd*). If I get any word on him, I'll call and let you know about it ... Yes, ma'am. Goodbye.

WILLIS (*as DAVEY hangs up*). See? Now that wasn't hard, was it?

DAVEY. But she's trying to make me feel bad. Just like when she called this morning.

WILLIS. We can be nasty creatures, can't we sometimes? Something happens to us we don't particularly like and we turn around and take it out on the next fellow. Frank's not been home?

DAVEY. Not last night and not this morning.

WILLIS. And she's irritated. I know her temper. So she takes it out on you. In turn you'll kick a garbage can or be rude to a customer. One person after another after another until the entire world is chasing it's tail. Of course, if you didn't answer the phone, she'd turn around and take it out on the kids ... or the dog.

DAVEY. Probably doing that anyway.

WILLIS. I've heard talk, and maybe it's just talk—that she's pretty hard to live with.

DAVEY. She acts like it's all my fault! I hate it when people do that to me!

WILLIS. Well, I know it's not your fault. Just step aside. When someone's anger comes your way, let it pass you. Don't you pass it on. Do you know where Frank is?

DAVEY. No, sir. Said he had some business up in Annapolis, and was talking about having to pick up something over at the junkyard in Davidsonville.

WILLIS. Not like him to drop out of sight like that, is it? I've always known him to be punctual. He in trouble?

DAVEY. Geez, not that I know of.

(AUGUSTA WOODFIELD enters the shop. She is 53 years old, dressed in a light summer dress and a straw hat with flowers on it.)

WILLIS. I'm sorry he's not around this morning because I'd like to commend your work to him.

DAVEY. Would you call him later, then?

AUGUSTA. Davey fix you up good, Aubrey?

WILLIS. Yes, he did. Afternoon, Augusta. He rebuilt that transmission perfectly as far as I can tell.

DAVEY. 'Lo, Aunt Augusta.

AUGUSTA. Afternoon, David.

WILLIS. And I'm going to make sure Frank hears about it.

AUGUSTA. Transmissions now? Isn't that a little complicated?

DAVEY. No. It's—

WILLIS. Works like a charm.

AUGUSTA. Well, I am pleased that he is better with automobiles than he is at answering his telephone. I've tried to reach you twice.

DAVEY. I been—

WILLIS. We were out in my Pontiac, Augusta. Just a test drive.

AUGUSTA. Well, I am on my way over to Mel-Eddy's—

WILLIS. Why not try that new Acme Supermarket over on Route 2? Why, my wife—

AUGUSTA. Thank you, no. Thought I'd stop by and see what David's going to want for lunch.

DAVEY. Janie's bringing me some sandwiches.

AUGUSTA. She's working today?

DAVEY. They're short at the dinette ... She's just filling in.

AUGUSTA. Girl's getting married in one week. She should be home helping her mother.

WILLIS. That's a mighty fancy invite you and your sister sent out for little Janie's wedding.

AUGUSTA. Thank you.

WILLIS. Appears it's going to be a very nice affair. I'm looking forward to it. Here you are, Davey. 20, 40, 60, 80 and one more makes \$100.00. And you take that \$2.00 change for yourself. It's to thank you for your good work.

DAVEY. Aw, I don't—

AUGUSTA. Take it, David. Good work may be its own reward, but extra money always comes in handy.

DAVEY. Thank you, Mr. Willis. (*Makes change from the cash drawer, pockets the \$2 tip.*)

WILLIS. Augusta, we've got to let more folks know about his good work. It's mighty handy having a man with these kinds of talents here in Edgewater. That Gulf gas station would have charged me an arm and a leg for this job.

DAVEY. They're OK, just got a bigger overhead to pay, s'all.

AUGUSTA. What they tell everybody anyway.

WILLIS. They charge too much and that's the top and bottom of it. This boy's too shy and quiet. He's got to start tootin' his own trumpet, Augusta. Folks 'round here have got to know his skills are available.

DAVEY. I been around the shop for almost five months.

WILLIS. See? It's time. This garage should be crawling with customers. In fact, I'm going to start spreading the word myself.

AUGUSTA. Well, David, maybe you do have a future as a mechanic. Haven't I been telling you that?

DAVEY (*she hasn't*). Yes, ma'am.

AUGUSTA. Too bad we can't do better than getting you a position with Frank Johnson. (*Then to WILLIS.*) You hear what that man did last Wednesday?

WILLIS. What was that?

DAVEY. Aw, Aunt Augusta, he's gotta make a livin'—

AUGUSTA. That man got a call on an accident on Route 214 over by that Beverly Farms drive-in restaurant. Some hoodlum went cowboying his souped-up automobile out of the gravel driveway there and smacked right into the back of an Oldsmobile.

WILLIS. Wasn't that the Cordonne boy?

AUGUSTA. Indeed. Those two Italian boys horsin' around in their cars—

DAVEY. Aw, Aunt Augusta—

AUGUSTA. Let me tell the story. So their fender's bent and the wheel won't move, so they can't get the car off the highway right away. Well, Frank tells this elderly couple he's going to have to tow their car back here to the shop to straighten out the fender. Well, Officer Purdy'll have nothing of that! He walks over ... and with his bare hands straightens out that fender skirt just fine.

DAVEY. Frank was just trying to make a little money.

AUGUSTA. Highway robbery if you ask me. He would have towed that car back here, made a big show of straightening out that fender and charged more—to people on a pension—Lordy! And you complain about those over to the Gulf gas station. They've got nothing on the crook that runs this place.

DAVEY. Ain't a crook.

AUGUSTA. David—

WILLIS. Well, Augusta, Frank's always been fair to me.

DAVEY. What about last Christmas, huh? Christmas Eve he came out in all that snow to get Uncle Ray's car started, didn't he?

AUGUSTA. Yes.

DAVEY. Turned out to be just a battery cable and he only charged for parts.

AUGUSTA. Well there's an exception to every rule, right Aubrey?

WILLIS. I s'pose.

(The telephone rings. DAVEY snatches it up.)

DAVEY. Johnson's Auto Repair Shop ... Oh, hello Mr. McLaughlin ... I'm fine, thank you, sir ... No, sir, he's not in the shop right now.

AUGUSTA. That's another thing, Aubrey Willis. The man's never here!

WILLIS. He doesn't need to be with Davey doing such fine work.

DAVEY *(still on the phone)*. I understand, sir. He said he'd be in late sometime today ... I'll give him the message ... Yes, sir. Goodbye.

AUGUSTA. I'd give him more than a message.

WILLIS. Calm yourself down, Augusta. It's a hot day, remember?

AUGUSTA. Don't you be telling me what to do. And furthermore—

WILLIS. Ah, as Mr. Garraway tells us, "Peace," Augusta. I do beg your pardon.

AUGUSTA. I thank you.

WILLIS. Now I must be getting up the road. I will see the two of you next weekend if not sooner. Good day.

AUGUSTA. Good afternoon, Aubrey.

DAVEY. Bye Mr. Willis, thanks for the tip.

WILLIS *(as he goes out the door)*. It's well deserved.

DAVEY. I did it! See that!?! I did it!

AUGUSTA. Did what?

DAVEY. A perfectly rebuilt automatic transmission, and I did it. Hear what he said? Wow!

AUGUSTA *(knows what's coming)*. Yes, but one repair job doesn't mean you've mastered the trade and are ready to go off—

DAVEY. Huh?

AUGUSTA. It's good that you've pleased one customer, but don't get too carried away is all I'm saying. Now, I need to know about the wedding—

DAVEY. Why not?

AUGUSTA. Why not what?

DAVEY. Why can't I be pleased with my work?

AUGUSTA. I'm not saying you shouldn't be pleased.

DAVEY. Y'are, too.

(DAVEY takes a seat in a rickety wooden chair besides a pail of gasoline. From the pail, he pulls out an old two barreled carburetor that he proceeds to clean with a stained rag from his back pocket.)

AUGUSTA. Now, David, you're not going to start in about moving—

DAVEY. And I'm fixing this carburetor—gonna be the sixth one.

AUGUSTA. That's very good, but—

DAVEY. I'm good with cars. Responsible, too!

AUGUSTA. Just don't get ahead of yourself, that's all I'm saying. In time—

DAVEY. Mr. Willis is very tough to please and I did good work according to him. My first solo flight and I've been successful. That counts for something, don't it?

AUGUSTA. Of course.

DAVEY. See?

(Silence between the two of them.)

DAVEY (*cont'd*). Nice man.

AUGUSTA. Him? (*Searches and finds a newspaper to place on the desk chair before sitting on it.*)

DAVEY. Gave me a \$2.00 tip.

AUGUSTA. Only because you charged him so little. That Aubrey Willis is so tight with a buck! It's become a joke with all the girls, how Aubrey Willis is going to skip over to that wedding and bring the cheapest present of all.

DAVEY. Aw—

AUGUSTA. Now about that wedding. Just how do you plan on getting to the service? Arthur's borrowing our car for the wedding party and we're riding with the Clements.

DAVEY. I told you, I got a ride with Pat Dawson and a couple of the other guys.

AUGUSTA. I thought you were going to have your own car next weekend. You've been talking about it for a month now.

DAVEY. That's not until the weekend after the wedding.

AUGUSTA. That wedding. Honestly! It's got Lucille worn to a frazzle. I told you how Janie wanted her sister Laurie to be maid of honor, but Laurie said she wouldn't even show her face at the wedding—on account of Janie stealing one of her boyfriends in high school. Some people hold grudges like that. Well! Laurie called Janie last week and told her she had had a change of mind. Not a change of heart, mind you, a change of mind. Now, Lucille is all out of her mind having to make another gown in less than a week. Can you imagine?

DAVEY. Uh huh. Uncle Gordon says he'd give 'em a couple of hundred bucks just to elope.

AUGUSTA. Oh no. A wedding's a once in a lifetime thing. Janie's going to look like a queen in her mother's gown.

DAVEY. A short one, anyway.

AUGUSTA. Stop that. And I don't want you boys doing any rough-housing at the reception either. That boy comes from a respectable family. Don't you embarrass your cousin Janie.

DAVEY. We won't.

AUGUSTA. And that Aubrey Willis, I tell you. You know what he gave your mother, God rest her soul, for a wedding gift back in '42?

DAVEY. What?

AUGUSTA. A candlestick. One candlestick. Lordy, if that don't beat all.

DAVEY. Well, I still think that he's a nice man. He appreciates me. Not like so many other people around here that treat me like I'm some kind of retard. He talks to me like I'm another man in this community. Not some kid. You know what we talked about when we drove his Pontiac to Cape Anne and back? History. Yeah. History, and about automobiles and how it's changed this country. That man's got a lot of education, and he was talking to me like we were a couple of professors at the university library or something. That means a lot to me. And now he's gonna tell lots of other folks about my work and bring the shop new customers. It's nice being appreciated by someone for once.

AUGUSTA. Everyone at home appreciates you, David.

DAVEY. People 'round here treat me like some kind of boob most of the time. Frank's wife, just this morning on the telephone, asked if I was "competent" enough to take a phone message. Called me a boob.

AUGUSTA. Now, that Johnson woman's well known for her nasty disposition anyway. Don't let it—

DAVEY. I am not a boob!

AUGUSTA. Of course not. None of us has ever—

DAVEY. Geez, it makes me feel real bad ... I don't like it here, Aunt Augusta. I just don't like it here. I want to leave. People call me names. I can get a better job, find a girl, a better situation, if I move to Washington.

AUGUSTA. I'm sure you will, in time.

DAVEY. Look how easy I'm building a reputation for myself.

That counts for something, don't it?

AUGUSTA. David, I don't think it's time for you to leave Edgewater. You're good with your hands—

DAVEY. I'm ready now. I know it.

AUGUSTA. We've had this talk. Now, don't be disrespectful.

DAVEY. Anthony's coming over from Washington for the wedding this weekend and I'm going to ask him to hire me.

AUGUSTA. Your cousin's coming for a wedding, not a job interview.

DAVEY. It's a big garage he owns and he's always short of help. 'Sides, he pays four, sometimes six dollars an hour.

AUGUSTA. I don't think it's a good idea.

DAVEY. When he was over for Easter, he told me: soon as I get better, I could come to him for a job.

AUGUSTA. And where are you going to live? They can't put you up. Not with two children and another on the way. They have no room.

DAVEY. Said he'd help me find my own apartment.

AUGUSTA. Did he?

DAVEY. Yep. And I think I'm ready for that kind of work.

AUGUSTA. How are you going to take care of your rent? Your food? The incidentals?

DAVEY. I've only been here five months and I'm getting a new car.

AUGUSTA. A used car.

DAVEY. It's new to me. Getting 900 out of the savings on Monday and paying cash. That'll still leave me over \$800 saved. All that counts for something, don't it?

AUGUSTA. I've been meaning to talk to you about that savings.

DAVEY. I want to leave.