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Dramatic Publishing

The Last Paving Stone



Comic fable
by
Y York



The Dramatic Publishing Company

The Last Paving Stone

Comic fable. By Y York.

Cast: 2m., 4w, (and The Sound of the Ground.)

Everyone is celebrating the placement of the last paving stone covering the last unpaved patch of ground on the planet—that is, everyone except Ito, a girl with ears so big she can hear the ground talking. Everyone else thinks Ito's "sound from the ground" is her attempt to justify her humiliatingly large ears. Even Jassmin, a lass with a nose so big she can smell a lie, doesn't believe in Ito's sound. Threatened with the forever-silenced ground, Ito risks the ire of her pa to share the ground sound ("spoken" in music) with normal-eared people. This modern comic fable about being different and sustaining the environment was workshopped at the Sundance Institute and premiered at Idaho Theatre for Youth. *Area staging.*

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Idaho Theatre for Youth production.
(l-r) Nick Garcia, Jamie Young, Karen Wennstrom,
Jennifer LaVelle, Rod Wolfe and Jodeen Revere.

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THE LAST PAVING STONE

A Play
by
Y YORK



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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“THE LAST PAVING STONE was originally commissioned and produced by the Idaho Theatre for Youth.”

For Zoë, for Olivia, for Althea, for Max

Anyone producing this play is free to create their own music for the Sound of the Ground.

A musical score by Robin Holcomb and Wayne Horvitz was composed for the Idaho Theatre for Youth premiere. For information on this score (3 brass, 1 percussion), contact:

Wayne Horvitz
3603 38th Avenue South
Seattle WA 98144
(206) 721-0843

The Last Paving Stone was first presented by Idaho Theater for Youth, May 1998, at Boise State University, Boise, Idaho. The production was directed by Mark Lutwak with music by Robin Holcomb and Wayne Horvitz and included the following artists:

Ito JAMIE YOUNG
Rama KAREN WENNSTROM
Sydney NICK GARCIA
Jassmin JENNIFER LAVELLE
Hizzoner ROD WOLFE
Dolor JODEEN REVERE

Set Designer TOBIN ALEXANDRA-YOUNG
Stage Manager MONICA COBURN
Props Design & Construction THOMAS VERDOS
Lighting Designer CURT NAEVE
Costume Designer MELANIE TAYLOR BURGESS
Assistant to Costume Designer DEENA LIEBHERR
Musical Director/Lead Musician BRAD PETERS
Technical Director STEPHEN WEIHS

* * * *

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The Idaho production was made possible by a grant from The National Endowment for the Arts.

THE LAST PAVING STONE

A Play in Two Acts

For 2 Men, 4 Women and the Sound of the Ground

CHARACTERS

ITO a girl with enormous ears

GROUND a musical characterization, can be portrayed by a single live instrument or single live symphony orchestra, or something live in between. The Ground dialogue, even though it is written in English words, is spoken entirely through music.

RAMA..... Ito's mother, a nutrient-slush controller

SIDNEY Ito's father, the Paving Expert

JASSMIN a girl with an enormous nose

HIZZONOR (m or f) the governor

DOLOR..... the unpaid right-hand advisor, constantly whispers to Hizzonor

Ground Note: Even when the Ground is not speaking, we hear it—its breathing or its heartbeat. We hear some Ground sound until the Ground is silenced by the placing of the paving stone.

SETTING: Anywhere in the not-too-distant future

ACT ONE

AT RISE: *A large paving stone hangs in the air, ready to be placed over the last unpaved patch of GROUND. There is a musical sound. It is the sound of the GROUND's breath or heartbeat. ITO enters and rushes to and across the unpaved patch.*

GROUND ("Hello.")

ITO. Hello to you, too.

GROUND ("Where have you been?")

ITO. I couldn't get here until now. But I brought you something.

GROUND ("What did you bring me?")

ITO. I brought you seeds! (*Sprinkles seeds on the unpaved patch of GROUND.*)

GROUND ("I don't want any seeds.")

ITO. Oh sure you do. You want seeds. So you can poke them up through the pavement.

GROUND ("I'm almost completely covered up.")

ITO. I *know* you're almost completely covered up, but I got an idea—

GROUND ("It better be a good one.")

ITO. It is a good one—see today is my birthday—

GROUND ("I forgot your birthday—")

ITO. Oh, don't worry about it—I almost forgot myself, that's not the point—see I get to make a request for my birthday.

GROUND (*"I want to give you a present."*)

ITO (*surprised*). You want to give me a present?

GROUND (*A calypso tune plays for a while; doesn't stop until below.*)

ITO (*happy*). Oh, thanks, thanks a lot. (*Starts to wiggle to the sound.*) I love it when you say this. It makes me want to move like this and like this and like this and I don't even know what you're trying to say.

(*RAMA enters on a scooter.*)

RAMA. Ito, stop it, stop it right now.

ITO. Stop what?

RAMA. Stop that wiggle-wiggle.

ITO. I can't stop.

RAMA. Then go do it someplace else.

ITO. This is the only place I can hear the sound.

RAMA. Shhhh—

ITO. I can't wiggle-wiggle without the sound.

RAMA. Hushhhhh—

ITO. I *used* to hear it every place.

RAMA. Ito, please!

ITO. But now the Ground's all covered.

GROUND (*The calypso stops. Returns to breath/heartbeat.*)

RAMA (*sees the paving stone*). Come out from under there.

ITO (*playing*). Come get me.

RAMA. I'm not going to stand under a paving stone.

ITO. You don't have to *stand*. You can do this. (*She runs back and forth.*)

GROUND ("You're tickling me." Then returns to breath/heartbeat.)

RAMA. What—? Now what's *that* supposed to be?

ITO. I call it fast-walking. It tickles the Ground.

RAMA. Ito— Hizzonor will be here any minute. You have to behave. This is a very big day for your pa.

ITO. It's my birthday!

RAMA (*a compromise*). All right, Ito. The morning will be for your *pa*. The afternoon will be for *you*—the whole afternoon to celebrate your birthday.

ITO. No, I got to make my request *now*.

RAMA. Later later later. You can wiggle-wiggle, you can make your request, you can play your talking to the Ground game—

ITO. I really do talk to the Ground, Ma—

RAMA. Later—anything you want, *later*. Come stand on the pavement.

ITO. I hate the pavement.

(*RAMA hauls ITO to the pavement.*)

GROUND ("Goodbye." Then returns to breath/heartbeat.)

ITO. Goodbye to you too.

RAMA. I'm not done with you yet.

ITO. I was talking to the Ground.

RAMA. Enough about the ground! (*Beat.*) Now. We're just going to stand here quietly and wait for the ceremony. We're not going to *move*, we're not going to *wiggle-wiggle*, we're *not* going to talk to the ground. (*Beat.*) Where's your scooter?

ITO. I walked.

RAMA (*reciting*). “Scooters are fast, efficient, fabulous, and pass easily across our pavement.”

ITO. I know, Ma. I hear it a hundred times a day.

RAMA. Don’t sass, Ito.

ITO. “Fast efficient fabulous,” my behind.

RAMA. It’s a proclamation!

ITO. Oh yeah. Just like “Twenty jumping jacks after breakfast”?

RAMA. That one was a problem.

ITO. You threw up every time.

RAMA. Proclamations keep us busy.

ITO. “All citizens must wear green clothes”?!

RAMA. That one was another problem

ITO. You never wore the shirt.

RAMA. I look terrible in green!

ITO. Proclamations are stupid.

RAMA. Ito, remember when we were Unbusy?! (*She shudders.*)

ITO (*sarcasm*). The Pave the Planet Project?!

RAMA. You are out of harmony, Ito.

ITO. Let me make my request—

RAMA. Make up a rhyme in the nick of time.

ITO. Not now.

RAMA. Yes, now, in the nick of time. (*Brief pause.*) Do it.

ITO (*sigh*). “At the end of every tizzy, when I can’t think straight and my mind is dizzy...”

RAMA (*helps*). “—something something something busy!”

ITO. Please don’t help, Ma. At the end of every tizzy, when I can’t think straight and my mind is dizzy, I untwist my thoughts, become unwound, by drinking and tasting ... (*Fast.*) ... of the sound from the Ground.

RAMA (*worried*). That may have helped *your* harmony, but it didn't do a thing for mine.

ITO. Sorry, Ma.

RAMA (*gives up*). Go get your scooter—

ITO. What about my request?

RAMA. Go! And no wiggle-wiggle on the way.

ITO (*to GROUND*). Bye. Bye bye.

GROUND (*"Goodbye" Return to breath/heartbeat.*)

(ITO exits fast walking. RAMA walks toward the unpaved patch of ground. She tries ITO's rhyme, tentative.)

RAMA. "At the end of every tizzy, when I can't think straight and my mind is dizzy, I untwist my thoughts, become unwound, by drinking and tasting—"

(Enter SIDNEY on a scooter.)

SIDNEY. I knew I'd find you here, Rama.

RAMA. Sidney, we're so proud of you. It's a beautiful stone.

SIDNEY (*looks up*). It is, isn't it. Saving the best, the most perfect for last. The last one.

RAMA. I never thought we'd finish.

SIDNEY. You doubted your own Sidney?

RAMA. It was the biggest task ever. (*Loaded.*) I thought we'd have to pass it along to Ito.

SIDNEY. Rama, please don't start.

RAMA (*defensive*). Ito is perfectly capable of—

SIDNEY. Ito is not going to get a task—she's not a leader, she's a loopy.

RAMA. But—

SIDNEY. Her wiggle-wiggle, her jerky jerks. Mad ravings about a sound from a talking *Ground*. And. She never never never listens to me.

RAMA. Sid—

SIDNEY. She'll take a job on the assembly line.

RAMA. I don't want her to leave home.

SIDNEY. She's the age, Ra. Did she make a birthday request?

RAMA. I told her to wait until after the ceremony.

SIDNEY. Why not now?

RAMA. Because *now* she'll request that your paving stone not get placed.

SIDNEY. That girl has no respect for my pavement. (*He picks up seed.*) See this? Ito.

(*RAMA picks up seed from the GROUND.*)

GROUND (*"Hello." Returns to breath/heartbeat.*)

SIDNEY. Every time, before we pave. They're forever *poking* through the pavement.

RAMA (*pleased*). Maybe she just takes after her ma.

SIDNEY. No. You *plant* seeds in nutrient slush, where none are wasted and every one grows.

RAMA. She's going to hate the assembly line.

SIDNEY. Nobody hates a job.

RAMA. What do you know about jobs? You have a *task*!

SIDNEY. Rama!

RAMA. People with *tasks* like their tasks, people with *jobs* hate them.

SIDNEY. You want the old days? You want Unbusy?!
(*Shudders.*)

RAMA. You know I don't. (*Pleads.*) But can't you talk to somebody about a task for Ito?

SIDNEY (*reluctantly*). I'll see.

RAMA. Really, you'll see?

SIDNEY (*looks up at paving stone*). Maybe after we place this—I'll see. (*SIDNEY puts his arm around her.*) Come here. I want to show you something. (*He takes her to the GROUND under the stone.*)

GROUND (*"Hello." Returns to breath/heartbeat.*)

SIDNEY (*pointing up*). Look at that.

RAMA (*looking*). Is that—

SIDNEY. Yes. I carved our names. "Rama" and "Sidney."

RAMA. ... But not "Ito"?

SIDNEY (*evasive*). No... I carved "Ito" on a... on a... something else. That's somewhere else.

RAMA. Can I see it?

SIDNEY. It's somewhere else.

RAMA. You didn't carve "Ito" on an anything.

SIDNEY. Ra! This is my day.

RAMA. Three little letters.

SIDNEY. She doesn't listen, she won't listen, she never
LISTENS TO ME!

RAMA. She tries.

SIDNEY. Not to listen to me, she doesn't. Not to pay attention to me, she doesn't. I get sabotage! Paving stone sabotage. Little seeds sprinkled under my paving stones so she can stand on her friend the ground.

RAMA (*beat*). You know, I kind of like standing on the ground myself.

GROUND (*"Thank you." Returns to breath/heartbeat.*)

SIDNEY (*beat, finger wagging*). I know what you're doing.

RAMA. I'm not doing anything.

SIDNEY. You're trying to make Ito seem normal: "Oh, yes, why everybody likes standing on the ground, everybody stands under a paving stone, everybody hears funny noises." You're putting me out of harmony, Ra.

RAMA. Make up a rhyme in the nick of time.

SIDNEY. I don't want to make up a rhyme.

RAMA. But you always feel better—

SIDNEY. Ra— (*Clenched teeth.*) I don't like to make up a rhyme in public.

RAMA. Let's go home. We can make up a rhyme before the ceremony.

SIDNEY (*exiting*). All right, but don't *help me*, I hate that.

RAMA (*exiting*). I don't do that—

(They exit on their scooters. ITO enters pushing scooter. She watches them go, and then puts down scooter and walks to the unpaved patch, stands on the GROUND.)

GROUND (*"Hello." Returns to breath/heartbeat.*)

ITO (*slightly over*). Hello. I thought up a new rhyme. (*Sprinkling seeds.*) "Many come and many go, but none to compare with the Mighty Ito. Young lass of many creative bursts, for adventure and dinner she hungers and thirsts. Beneath the shadow of the last paving stone, Ito walks sprinkling seeds by herself all alone."

GROUND (*Complains, a little at first, then begins to get more expansive about its feelings.*)

ITO (*stops and listens; in reply and over*). It isn't my fault. I don't want you to get paved. I was gonna use up my whole birthday request so you don't get paved.

GROUND (*The same complaint. The GROUND is angry.*)

ITO (*backs away to the pavement, in awe of what she hears; over*). Don't yell at me. Yell at Hizzonor or Dolor!

GROUND (*Complains.*)

ITO (*over*). Paving is a *proclamation*, I didn't have anything to do with it. So just shut up shut up shut up—

(*Enter JASSMIN on a scooter.*)

GROUND (*Retreats to breath/heartbeat.*)

JASSMIN. Hey, Ito. Who you yelling at?

ITO. Whadayouwant?

JASSMIN. Nothin'.

ITO. Why are you following me?

JASSMIN. I'm not.

ITO. Then don't be *sniffing* in my business.

JASSMIN. Don't say sniffing.

ITO (*singsong*). Sniffing, sniffing!

JASSMIN (*shouting*). Ears! Ears! Ears!

ITO (*hurt ears*). Ouch ouch ouch. (*They glare at each other.*) Why'd you scream at my ears?

JASSMIN. Why'd you say *sniffing*? Twice.

ITO (*beat, sincere*). Sorry.

JASSMIN. Yeah, me too.

ITO. The Ground yelled at me.

JASSMIN. I'll take care of that. (*Jumps on the GROUND.*)

Don't you yell at Ito, you big dirtball.

GROUND (“*Don't hit me, you little twerp.*”)

ITO (*worried and over*). Uh, Jass—maybe you shouldn't—

JASSMIN (*vicious, to GROUND*). We're gonna cover you up with a big rock today.

GROUND (*Begins to rumble.*)

ITO (*over*). Uh, I don't think you ought to—

JASSMIN (*over*). Lock you up in a big cement cell.

ITO (*to GROUND*). She doesn't know what she's saying—

JASSMIN. No more dumb sound outta you.

GROUND (*"Oh yeah?" A musical retort accompanied by an earth tremor.*)

ITO (*shaking*). Whoaaaa!

JASSMIN (*shaking, same time*). Whoaaaa!

(*ITO and JASSMIN shake and fall down.*)

GROUND (*Returns to breath/heartbeat.*)

JASSMIN (*stands and punches ITO in the arm*). You bully.

ITO. What?

JASSMIN. Get up and fight me while I'm *lookin'* at you.

ITO. I didn't do it. Didn't you hear?

JASSMIN. There's nothing *to hear!* There's just you *pushing*.

ITO. It was the Ground.

JASSMIN. This ground business has gone too far.

ITO. I didn't—

JASSMIN. It's fine if you want to pretend to hear your *friend* the ground, but when you start knocking me down, that's going too far.

ITO. What do you mean "pretend"?

JASSMIN. Oh come off it, Ito. There is no ground sound.

ITO. What?

JASSMIN. It's all make believe.

ITO. You don't believe it?

JASSMIN. Never have.

ITO. I believe your smells.

JASSMIN. My smells are real.