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Dramatic Publishing

Turns

Drama
by
Ric Averill



Turns

Drama. By Ric Averill. Cast: 4m., 5 to 6w., extras as desired. Nothing is going well for Marta. She's competing with her best friend, Kelly, for the role of Gerda in a dance production of *The Snow Queen* at their local arts center. She now only speaks to her friend, Nicholas, online. Marta's mom is still "six feet deep" in the cemetery, and suddenly her father, Timo, is back from Cleveland—with a "partner." In his effort to reconnect with his daughter, Timo accepts the ballet teacher's offer to be part of *The Snow Queen* ballet. Marta isn't sure what to think of this intrusion into her private world of dance. Marta meets Timo's partner, Mark, who has built her a barre in their home and who is "nicer than her dad." Ultimately, father and daughter dance the roles of the Hobgoblin King and the Hobgoblin Princess. They dance toward each other keeping their eyes locked, turning, connecting, turning, connecting—a beautiful and disciplined effort to keep from getting too dizzy. Lighthearted at times, the play also navigates strong emotional territory as Marta deals with loss, abandonment and, ultimately, forgiveness. *Unit set. Approximate running time: 70 minutes. Code: TP9.*

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URNS

By
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(TURNS)

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For my mentors:

Stu Averill, Dale Easton, Jed Davis,
Kim Peter Kovac, Max Bush,
Ron Parker and Jeanne Averill.

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Turns premiered at Lawrence Arts Center, Theater at the Center, Lawrence, Kansas, in the fall of 2006, with the following:

CAST

MARTA Sarah Bezek
TIMO Joseph Serrano*
MARK Chris Wheatley*
GRAN, or RUBY Kim O'Brien
CHARLIE David Hollond
NICHOLAS, or GECKO Chris Hilding
KELLY Maddie Backus
MARIAH Leslie Cunningham
MISS DEBBIE Cheryl Weaver**

OTHER BALLET STUDENTS, DANCERS &

MUSICIANS in *The Snow Queen* ballet . . Addison Frei,
Amelia Weil, Bailey Frei, Kalee Forsythe,
Helen Hawkins, Martha Keslar, Eliza Gant,
Devany West, Maggy Keslar and Calder Hollond

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director Ric Averill
Assistant Director Elizabeth Sullivan
Sets & Lights Danny Rogovein
Soundscape Ric Averill
Costumes Jennifer Glenn

* *Professional actor*

** *Actor's Equity Association*

TURNS

CHARACTERS

MARTA dance student, 11 years old
TIMO her father, about 28
MARK Timo’s partner, a carpenter, 30
GRAN, or RUBY Marta’s grandmother
CHARLIE Ruby’s live-in boyfriend, 50s
NICHOLAS, or GECKO a somewhat nerdy, 11-year-old
KELLY Marta’s best friend, 12 years old
MARIAH another friend
MISS DEBBIE Marta’s ballet teacher, 30s
MARIAH’S MOTHER (non-speaking)
OTHER BALLET STUDENTS, DANCERS &
MUSICIANS in *The Snow Queen* ballet

TIME: Over the course of several weeks, fall, the early 2000s.

PLACES: A dance studio, the Arts Center waiting area, Timo’s house, Timo’s car, Gran’s house, Gran’s backyard, a cemetery, the performance space of the Arts Center and elsewhere in Marta’s mind.

SETTING: The unit set includes a large open center area which doubles as the dance studio and performance space. Upstage is a long barre for dance classes and a clouded mirror. On the sides are chairs, benches, a barbecue grill, the front passenger and driver’s seat of a car and an easy chair to represent Timo’s house.

TURNS

(Lights come up on MARTA, center stage. She is in dance clothes, with a worn tutu. She has an mp3 player tucked tightly into her tights. The THEME FROM SWAN LAKE plays as though coming through the player. The audience hears it as she hears it in her head. MARTA begins a tragic dance, moving slowly to one side on toes, as though en pointe. She goes to the side of the stage, leans one way, then goes back to the other side and leans the other way, she looks up into the heavens and then slowly curls up. Before the MUSIC runs out there is an electronic ding, as though a computer IM is heard. She stops, takes off the headset. SWAN LAKE ends. She walks to her computer which is at a desk far downstage. She types.

As she does, the lights come up on GECKO [NICHOLAS' screen name. MARTA's screen name is MARTA] in a pool of light at a desk far upstage from MARTA. She speaks the words as well.)

MARTA. I'm sorry. Marta isn't available to take your call.
GECKO *(types and speaks at the same time as well)*. Hello, Marta's computer. Can you tell me when Her Ladyship is going to the Arts Center?

MARTA (*types*). L8R. (*Looks at her watch.*) RSN.

GECKO. *How soon?*

MARTA. Will the Gecko be there?

GECKO. Climbing the walls.

MARTA. What class?

GECKO. Today I will be throwing pots.

MARTA. How far?

GECKO. LOL.

MARTA. I have Ballet III.

GECKO. What a surprise.

MARTA. Could have been Ballet IV.

GECKO. Look under the bench in the waiting area.

MARTA. You going to be hiding there?

GECKO. Just look.

(RUBY, MARTA's not-too-elderly but still slightly worn-looking GRANDMOTHER appears moving to MARTA's room. She stops at the door.)

RUBY. Homework?

MARTA. Just finishing, Gran. (*Types and talks quickly in a whisper.*) Gotta run. TAFN.

GECKO. CU.

MARTA. If I don't CU 1st.

RUBY. Marta, you're gonna be late again.

GECKO. TLK2UL8ER.

MARTA. TNT. (*She signs off, lights go off on GECKO. MARTA looks up at RUBY, slightly annoyed.*)

RUBY. Charlie's gonna drive you. I've gotta finish that quilt for church. Get your Flip-flops on.

(MARTA pulls off her tutu and shoves it in her backpack. She grabs a pair of jeans and pulls them on, slips off her ballet shoes and slides into Flip-flops.

She then shoves a book in as CHARLIE, an easygoing working-class man, comes into the room.)

CHARLIE. You ready, turnip-seed? *(She shakes her head at his weird nickname.)*

MARTA. Yes, Charlie.

(MARTA walks past CHARLIE, who scruffs her hair as she goes by. She shakes it out.

They move to the car area, which represents all cars in the play. She hops in. CHARLIE starts the car. They ride a moment, near their destination. CHARLIE looks down at her.)

CHARLIE. Your dad'll be picking you up. *(MARTA freezes, doesn't respond, puts her earpiece back on.)*
You hear me.

(MARTA nods, opens the door and runs out. She turns up her MUSIC as she "walks into" a new space. The music is TARANTELLA FROM LA BOUTIQUE FANTASQUE and very intense. She walks, then skips, very determined to hear nothing, feel nothing, see nothing.

When she arrives "upstairs" just outside her ballet class, she moves into an area with some small lockers,

quickly removes her Flip-flops, jeans and pulls her shoes out of her bag, starts to put them on.

As she does this, her friend KELLY enters, slowly putting on her shoes. She is a bit dreamy. Other BALLERINAS enter, changing from street clothes to dance wear. Focus is on KELLY and MARTA.)

KELLY. Who do you want to be?

MARTA *(without taking off headphones)*. What?

KELLY. In *The Snow Queen*? *(Reaches down and lifts up one earphone.)* The holiday show? The poster's are up...

MARTA. Oh. *(Takes her earphone and starts to put it back.)*

KELLY. What're you listening to? Black-eyed Peas? *(Starts to grab it to listen but MARTA takes it back, quickly.)* Can't have mp3s in Miss Debbie's class anyway.

MARTA. I'm putting it away. *(She does.)*

KELLY. So, what *do* you want to be? *(MARTA just shrugs.)* Who do you want to be?

MARTA. Me?

KELLY. In *The Snow Queen*?

MARTA. Whoever Miss Debbie tells me to be.

KELLY. That's stupid. You have to want to be someone. Otherwise you can't get all ugly with the rest of us when you don't get it.

MARTA. *That's* stupid.

KELLY. I'm kidding, Marta.

(Among the other girls coming in is MARIAH, a very attractive, tall and lean dancer, followed by her

MOTHER—nonspeaking—who sits on the waiting bench.)

KELLY (*cont'd*). I know you want to be Gerda.

MARTA. You want to be Gerda.

KELLY. Everyone wants to be Gerda.

(MARIAH mutters agreement to this statement as she changes to go into class.)

MARTA. I want to be one of the snow fairies.

KELLY. No, you don't.

MARTA. That's what I'll be—or one of the hobgoblin bridesmaids.

KELLY. Maybe, maybe not. Maybe you can understudy Gerda.

MARTA. Get a clue, Kelly. They won't do understudies.

KELLY. They will. I know. Last year, in *Why the Nutcracker Fought the Mouse King*, eleven people got sick in one night—and the whole backstage smelled like vomit. So Robert said, "This year there'll be understudies, by God."

MARTA. He didn't say, "by God."

KELLY. He did, at my mom's, during the fundraiser. You want to come over Saturday? Megan and Mariah will be there.

MARTA. I have drama in the morning and dance all afternoon.

KELLY. And after?

MARTA. Maybe.

KELLY. I got new shoes.

MARTA. I saw.

KELLY. You didn't say anything.

MARTA. You got new shoes.

KELLY. Do you like them?

MARTA. They look like your last shoes.

KELLY (*frustrated with MARTA*). You are so...

(They walk from the changing area into the large center area to the barre.

MISS DEBBIE comes into the main dance area and smiles at the GIRLS.)

MISS DEBBIE. Good afternoon, girls.

GIRLS. Afternoon, Miss Debbie.

(GIRLS take place at barre, KELLY and MARTA close to each other. MARIAH moves somewhat close to them. KELLY gives MARTA a "she's so awful" look.)

MISS DEBBIE. Anyone else having a hard time being inside today? (*They nod.*) I could barely leave my garden. If the Dog hadn't jumped the fence again, I'd have lost track of time. All right, well, any new faces? (*She looks around, smiles, checks off names—as many as are cast. Real names or contemporary names in addition to those below may be used.*) Mariah, Lily, Marta, Megan, Kelly. (*Looks at a new face.*) You're...?

HILARY. Hilary. I moved up.

MISS DEBBIE. Welcome, Hilary, and Sarah. All right. Stretch a little on your own. (*They do.*) Don't forget *Snow Queen* auditions, this Sunday, two p.m. for your

group. And remind your older and younger brothers, sisters, parents...boyfriends. We always need boys.

(KELLY makes a barf gesture, MARTA smiles. MARIAH looks on slightly disapproving.)

MISS DEBBIE *(cont'd)*. Robert promises to create as many roles as we have dancers and actors... Now... *(GIRLS join and begin doing exercises at the barre.)* Fifth position, starting right. *Demi-plié, tondue front, plié, tondue side, then back, side, en croix.* Do that twice, then turn and do the left.

(Simple ballet barre PIANO MUSIC starts, which may be live or pre-recorded, and the GIRLS go to work. MISS DEBBIE watches.)

As they work, TIMO, a slight and handsome young man, walks on and sits, waiting and watching. He wears fairly contemporary clothes and sunglasses. MARTA looks up, sees him, tries to look away. KELLY notices.)

KELLY. Who's that?

MARTA. Don't know.

KELLY. Why are you looking away, then? Think he's in Beau's class?

MARTA. No.

KELLY. Who is he, then?

MARTA. Shh. Miss Debbie's watching.

MISS DEBBIE. Good, let's do a nice, smooth *ronde de jambe*. Prepare, then forward four times, then back four.

At the end, lunge, lean forward, stretch back, then up to an arabesque. Then turn and do the other side.

(They continue to work. TIMO flips through the Arts Center catalog that is near the bench. He makes small talk with MARIAH's MOM. MARTA looks up, notices him.)

KELLY. He's hitting on your mom, Mariah.

MARIAH *(looks back at KELLY, a disdainful look)*. Shh.

MARTA. Shh.

MISS DEBBIE. I can hear talking and the shushing is no better. *(The GIRLS are quiet, doing their barre work. MARTA is distracted, looks again.)* The other side?

KELLY. Why's he got sunglasses? You think he's with the film guys? Maybe he's from Hollywood. He's looking at you.

MARTA. Kelly, just shut it, OK?

MISS DEBBIE. Marta, Kelly, is there a problem?

KELLY. Some guy... *(Indicates the bench.)*

MISS DEBBIE *(looks at MARTA, then back at KELLY)*.

It's all right, Kelly. *En revele.* *(KELLY looks at TIMO, MISS DEBBIE, then back at MARTA.)* Grand battements, two to the front, two side, two back, then reverse left, back, side, front, OK? Don't swing with the hips. All from the hip socket. *(PIANO MUSIC is cued or begins and they begin the high kicks.)*

KELLY *(after a few more exercises)*. Is Charlie coming to pick you up?

(MARTA doesn't answer, but moves to another part of the barre. The class continues.)

Focus switches to where TIMO sits near MARIAH's MOM. GECKO [NICHOLAS], walks up, looks into the room where the GIRLS are dancing, then sits down. TIMO looks at him, then back at the dancers. NICHOLAS takes a small package out of his jacket, slips it under the bench, stands and walks away. TIMO watches him go off, amused. The class finishes up.)

MISS DEBBIE. And *grande plié* and thank you. *(They all clap.)* Sunday, girls, don't forget Sunday—and please pick up the dressing room today. We only keep things in the lost and found for...two weeks, then the homeless wear them dancing down the street.

SEVERAL GIRLS *(muttering with her, joining, imitating and having fun)*. Two weeks, then the homeless wear them dancing...

(As they giggle and go to changing area, MARTA makes a beeline and quickly slides on jeans, shoes off, Flip-flops on. KELLY is close behind, talking with MARIAH.)

KELLY. He does look like he's from Hollywood or something.

MARIAH. Kelly, don't talk to me in class, OK? I'm serious.

KELLY. That's not always a good thing, you know. You trying out Sunday?

MARIAH. Everyone is.

KELLY. I'm going to audition for Gerda.

MARIAH. Everyone's doing that, too. Did you pick up a side?

KELLY. A what?

MARIAH. Scripts, at the front desk, so you can be ready?

(Smiles, tosses a sweater over her shoulder and stands, moves to join her MOTHER.) Good luck.

(MARTA stands and does a beeline, not really seeing MARIAH. They almost collide.)

KELLY. I'll get one. Marta, you wanna go down to the desk and get a—

MARTA *(mumbles)*. 'Scuse me. *(MARTA moves to the bench, looks at TIMO, who nods at her.)*

TIMO. Hey, Marta.

(MARTA leans down, reaches under the bench, retrieves a small bag and then spins on her heel, and starts off. TIMO shakes his head and follows her toward the car. KELLY turns to MARIAH.)

KELLY. She knows him.

MARIAH. That's her dad, pea-brain.

(MARIAH takes her MOTHER's hand and they walk off, chattering. KELLY stares after MARTA, a little stunned.)

Focus shifts to TIMO and MARTA who get in the car. MARTA pulls a book out of her backpack immediately, opens it and reads. TIMO sits in the driver's seat and begins to drive. A little time passes. TIMO looks at her.)

TIMO. So what are you reading?