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Dramatic Publishing

Polaroid Stories



Drama
By
Naomi Iizuka



The Dramatic Publishing Company

Polaroid Stories

Cast: 5m., 5w. A visceral blend of classical mythology and real life stories told by street kids, Naomi Iizuka's *Polaroid Stories* journeys into a dangerous world where myth-making fulfills a fierce need for transcendence, where storytelling has the power to transform a reality in which characters' lives are continually threatened, devalued and effaced. Not all the stories these characters tell are true; some are lies, wild yarns, clever deceptions, but whether or not a homeless kid invents an incredible history for himself isn't the point, explains diarist-of-the-street Jim Grimsley. "All these stories and lies add up to something like the truth." Inspired in part by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, *Polaroid Stories* takes place on an abandoned pier on the outermost edge of a city, a waystop for dreamers, dealers and desperadoes, a no-man's land where runaways seek camaraderie, refuge and escape. Serpentine routes from the street to the heart characterize the interactions in this spellbinding tale of young people pushed to society's fringe. Informed, as well, by interviews with young prostitutes and street kids, *Polaroid Stories* conveys a whirlwind of psychic disturbance, confusion and longing. Like their mythic counterparts, these modern-day mortals are engulfed by needs that burn and consume. Their language mixes poetry and profanity, imbuing the play with lyricism and great theatrical force. *Flexible staging.*

*Cover photo: Actors Theatre of Louisville's 21st Humana Festival of New American Plays featuring Danny Seckel and Denise Casano.
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POLAROID STORIES

by
NAOMI IIZUKA

An adaptation of Ovid's
Metamorphoses



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NAOMI IIZUKA

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(POLAROID STORIES)

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Polaroid Stories was first workshopped site-specifically through The Playwrights Center in Minneapolis, Minn. En Garde Arts also workshopped the play in New York at PS 122.

The first performance was at the Humana Festival of New Plays, Actors Theatre of Louisville, March 1997. Directed by Jon Jory, it included the following cast:

D (dionysus) SCOT ANTHONY ROBINSON
Philomel MONICA BUENO
Eurydice KIM GAINER
Persephone/Semele DENISE CASANO
Orpheus BRUCE McKENZIE
Narcissus MICHAEL RAY ESCAMILLA
Echo MIRIAM BROWN
G (zeus, hades) NELSON VASQUEZ
The Lydian Sailor DANNY SECKEL
Ariadne CAITLIN MILLER

Scenic Designer PAUL OWEN
Costume Designer MARCIA DIXCY JORY
Lighting Designer GREG SULLIVAN
Sound Designer MARTIN R. DESJARDINS
Properties Designer MARK J. BISSONNETTE
Production Stage Manager DEBRA ACQUAVELLA
Assistant Stage Manager CIND SENENSIEB
Dramaturg MICHAEL BIGELOW DIXON
Casting LAURA RICHIN CASTING

Polaroid Stories was most recently produced by Campo Santo at Intersection for the Arts in San Francisco, Calif., 1998.

POLAROID STORIES

**A Play in Two Acts
For 5 Men and 5 Women**

CHARACTERS

D (dionysus)

EURYDICE

PERSEPHONE (also SEMELE)

ORPHEUS (also TEREUS)

PHILOMEL

SKINHEADgirl (a.k.a. neon girl)

NARCISSUS

ECHO

SKINHEADboy (a.k.a. oklahoma boy/speedracer)

G (a.k.a. zeus, hades)

Set requirements: Minimal

Approximate running time: 2 hours

ACT ONE

fucked-up love songs

Prologue

(In the darkness, PHILOMEL begins to sing. A fragment of an old song, familiar and haunting. Her voice is solitary, unadorned, childlike. The sound of the streets grow around her voice: traffic like the ocean, trains rumbling underground, a pay phone ringing and ringing, pieces of radio, a bass line, glass shattering, a faint siren faraway. In a sea of noise, PHILOMEL's song is gradually lost.)

THE FATE OF THE LYDIAN SAILOR

the story of oklahoma boy

(A small light in the darkness. Shadows like fish underwater. A light. D appears, a figure in the darkness.)

- D. this is how it begins, this is where—
i seen him out of nowhere, crazy amped-out boy
crazy oklahoma boy,
i found him up by port authority,
scheming and scamming, nickel diming what he can—
i watch him awhile, see him get all's he can get,
and then he goes, he gets high on spray. oklahoma
boy likes spray.
spray's cheap, he says, and then he smiles like a psy-
chopath.

tell you what, he says to me, i ain't got a friend in
this whole world,
are you my friend, he says to me,
what you got for me, friend? i got a kingdom, i says
to him,
behold my kingdom,
and he thinks that's the funniest thing.
he laughs so hard he falls down.
and then we get high. we fly.

oklahoma boy likes speed,
he likes it cause it makes him go so fast it makes him
go fucking speedracer fast with them fucking speed-
racer eyes.
one night, he rips me off, digs around till he finds my
stash,
i hear his fingers, i hear his eyes clicking in his head,
i hear him laughing in the dark
so high he can't hardly stand, he can't hardly breathe,
and then he takes my stuff, he goes away—
pockets full of quarters, he finds some arcade, video
world is all there is all there ever was,
oklahoma boy disappears for days,
all speedracer eyes, big eyes, black as night, full of
laser beams and showers of light, galaxies and plan-
ets, whole worlds exploding in his head, and it's so
bright,
what it is, right, it's so bright, for a second you think
you can see then all there is is black—

(Darkness.)

A LIST OF MINOR GODS AND GODDESSES

(Voices in the dark call out from every direction. Sometimes the voices cut each other off. Sometimes they overlap. A sea of names spoken fast and loud. The names are statements, taunts, teases, fighting words.)

M3. my name is bandit

F1. my name is tina

M2. my name is blondboy

M1. My name is ramon

F2. my name is mohawk girl

F3. my name is lupe

M4. my name is viper

F4. my name is lisa j

M5. my name is crazy todd

M1. my name is ninja b

F5. my name is desiree

M2. my name is david c

F1. my name is rochelle

M3. my name is tiny

M4. my name is paco

M5. my name is skater pete

F2. my name is mai thai

F3. my name is baby punk

M1. my name is tiger

M2. my name is little ray

F4. my name is candy

F5. my name is loca

F1. my name is skinheadgirl

M3. my name is baby j

M4. my name is nazi mike

M5. my name is tweeker shawn

F2. my name is nothing girl

M1. my name is oklahoma boy

F3. my name is jamie b

M2. my name is zero

M3. my name is shadow

M4. my name is scratch

M5. my name is nicky z

M1. my name is dogboy

M2. my name is skinhead steve

F4. my name is happy girl

M3. my name is marco

M4. my name is psycho john

F5. my name is melody

M5. my name is scarface

M1. my name is kaos

F1. my name is disappear

(The voices reverberate, echo. And then there is silence.)

HOW EURYDICE CROSSES THE RIVER OF FORGETFULNESS

the journey between two worlds

(EURYDICE is crossing the River of Forgetfulness. She walks through the water. Ancient trash floats across the water's surface, which gleams black as oil. PERSEPHONE waits for her on the other side. She is the queen of the dead.)

EURYDICE. my name is disappear. my name is disappear.

PERSEPHONE. hey! who do you think you're talking to, disappear?

EURYDICE. i'm talking to anybody who's listening

PERSEPHONE. is that right?

EURYDICE.

i'm talking to somebody who knows how it goes—
you know how it goes, i know you do, too—see it in
your eyes. so you tell me then, cause i want to
know, tell me about the places i've never been to,
tell me about all the places i'm gonna go to

PERSEPHONE. don't you start that song with me, little
girl

EURYDICE.

i said to him, this town is too damn small for me
this town ain't good for nothing—
i want to get out of here
i want to see the world
i want to see some fireworks in this life, is what i said
to him

PERSEPHONE. you ain't telling me nothing new, nothing i
ain't heard before

EURYDICE.

i want to be famous
i want to sleep in satin sheets

PERSEPHONE. girl, please

EURYDICE.

i want to dance and dance all night long
i want to go someplace in this damn life, is what i
said to him—

PERSEPHONE. heard that, heard that, heard that all before

EURYDICE.

but see, it's like this: i got a man like a bad dream
follows me no matter where i go

PERSEPHONE. heard that, too

EURYDICE.

i feel his eyes on my back
i feel his breath on my neck, no matter how far i get
to

(ORPHEUS appears out of the shadows, approaches.)

EURYDICE.

and he's all
shut up, you ain't going nowhere, what are you think-
ing, girl, who are you kidding?
and i'm looking at him
and all i can think is
who
are
you
to
me?
who were you ever to me?

like you matter to me
like anything you say is going to make a difference to
me
like i want to stay in that nowhere town doin nothing
all my life
like i want to be with you forever
like i want that

PERSEPHONE. little girl

EURYDICE. i ain't no little girl

PERSEPHONE. little girl is all you are—

EURYDICE. i ain't no little girl, all acting like you know
me

PERSEPHONE. i know you, little girl. i know you like i
know myself.

*(ORPHEUS comes so close to EURYDICE, a chain
fence is all that separates them.)*

ORPHEUS.

what are you thinking, little girl—
—you ain't going nowhere—

EURYDICE. —you can't touch me—

ORPHEUS. —is that right—

EURYDICE. —where i'm going to, baby, you ain't never
going to find me—

ORPHEUS. —shut up—

EURYDICE. —how do i look walking away?

ORPHEUS. —you ain't walking away—

EURYDICE. —how do i look walking away from you,
baby, how do i look to you—

(ORPHEUS tries to follow her. He climbs the fence and falls, crashing to the ground.)

ORPHEUS. baby—

EURYDICE. i take the bus across a thousand miles

ORPHEUS. i can see you

EURYDICE. i sleep i sleep

ORPHEUS. i can see the veins under your skin, i can see
your heart beating

EURYDICE. i sleep i sleep, i sleep like a dead person. it's
like i disappear. and when i wake up, i'm a thousand
miles away, and it's all like "where you from, you got a
place to stay, how'd you like to come spend the night,
how'd you like a little of this, how'd you like a taste just
a taste, come on, baby, this shit is good—"

PERSEPHONE. ain't nothing new, i know how this goes:

ORPHEUS. hey, girl

PERSEPHONE. "hey, girl"

ORPHEUS. i'm talking to you

PERSEPHONE. "hey girl"

ORPHEUS. i'm talking to you

PERSEPHONE. "yeah, i'm talking to you—you got a
name? where are you from? you got a place to stay? you
need a place to crash awhile—hey—"

ORPHEUS. hey, girl—i'm talking to you, ain't nobody else
in the world but you—

PERSEPHONE. "how'd you like to spend the night, how'd
you like a little of this"

ORPHEUS. i can see you. baby, i can see straight through
you.

PERSEPHONE. "how'd you like a taste, just a taste"

ORPHEUS. don't you walk away from me

PERSEPHONE. “come on, baby, this shit is good”

ORPHEUS.

don't you walk away from me when i'm talking to
you—
hey—hey, i'm talking to you—bitch—

(The sound of a woman singing through a sea of static snow. ORPHEUS tries to climb the fence one more time. He falls, crashing to the ground, tries to climb again and again.)

EURYDICE.

you look like someone who knows how it goes, so
i'm going to tell you how it goes,
i'm high, right, and this guy
he says to me, where are you from—bitch—
he wants to touch me, get inside of me, know every-
thing about me.
he wants to know how i got all these scars on my
pretty little body.
i tell him, sweet as i know how: baby, i forget.
i drink from the river of forgetfulness.
i forget the names i forget the faces i forget the stories
i forget all kinds of shit.

when he's asleep, i roll him, i kick his ass, take his
cash, take his fancy watch
and i'm looking at him
and all i can think is
who are you to me,
like you know me

like you think i'm going to tell you the truth
like you think i'm going to give you that—

yeah, baby, i got scars
i got scars all over, but i don't even know this story,
see.
ain't no story, cause i forget.

(EURYDICE gets to the other side of the river and disappears with PERSEPHONE into the darkness. On the other side of a chainlink fence, on the other side of the river, ORPHEUS watches EURYDICE disappear. He has blood on his hands from where the chainlink cut his skin.)

THE STORY OF NARCISSUS gazing in the mirror

(NARCISSUS is a skinny, beautiful boy in dirtied-up rave wear. ECHO is a runaway girl, plain and unwashed.)

NARCISSUS. yeah, so, how it goes, right, how it goes is
like: and then and then
ECHO. and then and then and then and then
NARCISSUS. it's like it's like
ECHO. it's like it's like
NARCISSUS. it's like this, check it out: i meet this guy,
right, and we go to his place and it's phat it's plush
ECHO. it's phat it's plush
NARCISSUS. it's all glass and chrome
ECHO. glass and chrome

NARCISSUS. black leather, plush pile, big-screen tv with surround sound

ECHO. surround sound

NARCISSUS. mirrors everywhere, on the walls, in the hall, on the ceiling, looking at myself

ECHO. looking at myself

NARCISSUS. and we're kicking back, and it's cool

ECHO. it's cool

NARCISSUS. and he's like, are you hungry? and i'm like, yeah, i'm hungry, and so we order in, and i eat steak and eggs and fries and some pizza and all this ice cream and shit, and i'm eating like a pig cause i'm starvin

ECHO. i'm starvin

NARCISSUS. and we're drinking all this wine, and he's like, this is nice wine, and i'm like, yeah, it's ok, nothing special

ECHO. nothing special

NARCISSUS. and he busts out this big fat doobie, and i'm like, all right, and we get high

ECHO. we get high

NARCISSUS. and i say to him, dude, if this is the high life, dig, the high life is ok by me, and that makes him laugh so hard, and i see his teeth like tiny pearls all shiny white, and i'm like, dude, you are so ugly

ECHO. you are so ugly

NARCISSUS. and he laughs, and he's like, how about a movie, so he pops in a tape, and it's like scarface, and it's like my favorite movie, i love that movie, that movie is so excellent

ECHO. so excellent

NARCISSUS. "say hello to my little friend"

ECHO. "little friend"