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**American Association of
Community Theatre AACT
NewPlayFest Winning Plays:
Volume 2 (2016)**

Lighthouse by
WILLIAM BAER

Laguna Beach, Ohio by
MALCOLM MACDONALD

Wash, Dry, Fold by
NEDRA PEZOLD ROBERTS

Gracefully Ending by
A.J. DELAUDER

The Emperor of North America by
THOMAS HISCHAK

Shades of Valor by
KAREN L. LEWIS

Get Out of Dodge by
JEANNE DRENNAN



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INTRODUCTION

The American Association of Community Theatre (AACT) is proud to present the seven winning scripts and playwrights of the second AACT NewPlayFest cycle. AACT NewPlayFest is an initiative by AACT to address the critical need for new, high-quality plays for community theatre audiences around the globe. It has been embraced by playwrights and theatres across the country, bringing exciting theatrical journeys to producing companies and joyful realization and anticipation to playwrights and their work.

AACT is pleased to partner with Dramatic Publishing Company for this program. AACT NewPlayFest is unparalleled in new play competitions, providing full productions of the winning scripts, plus publication and rights representation by a major theatrical publisher. Also thanks to Texas Nonprofit Theatres, Inc., for pioneering the way. Its TNT POPS! New Play Project served as the model for AACT NewPlayFest.

This second cycle of AACT NewPlayFest, ending in 2016, proved even more successful than the first. More scripts were submitted, and seven theatres across the country produced world premieres of winning scripts. This festival continues to benefit the producing theatres by giving them the excitement of bringing new works to their patrons, and the playwrights by experiencing quality productions of their work, and publication and representation by Dramatic Publishing. The benefits of AACT NewPlayFest will expand as additional theatres produce these top-notch plays.

We hope you will consider one of these plays for your next season.

Break a leg,

Julie Crawford, Executive Director
American Association of Community Theatre

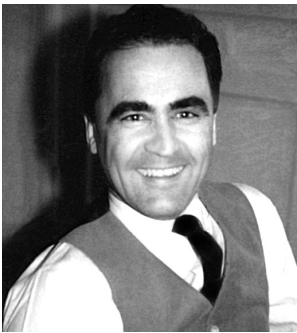
The American Association of Community Theatre is the resource connection for America's theatres. AACT represents the interests of more than 7,000 theatres across the United States and its territories, as well as theatre companies with the U.S. Armed Services overseas. To learn more about AACT NewPlayFest and AACT go to aact.org.

FOREWORD

Jack K. Ayre, born in Pittsburgh on July 9, 1921, celebrated his 90th birthday before passing away in December 2011. At his birthday party in Sunnyvale, Calif., he sang with a barbershop quartet—one of his favorite activities—and celebrated with his cousin and lifelong friend, Frank Ayre Lee. Though as adults they lived on opposite sides of the country, the cousins kept in touch through letters that displayed a love for the written word and an irreverent sense of humor. Jack had participated in theatre productions at Drew University in New Jersey and at a community theatre in Connecticut in his younger years, and continued that interest when he moved to California.

Frank, a chemical engineer by profession, was also an avid aficionado of theatre and had dabbled in playwriting, adapting Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* for a children's theatre production, and penning *McSteg*, a tongue-in-cheek discourse ribbing his cousin Jack and based on a scene in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

The Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation has been created by the children of Frank as a tribute to their father, who passed away in August 2012, and a legacy for the creative endeavors of Jack, who was an advertising executive and public relations director. The family is pleased to honor both men through a lasting legacy promoting new works for theatre.



Jack K. Ayre



Frank Ayre Lee

Photos: Courtesy of the Jack K. Ayre and Frank Ayre Lee Theatre Foundation.

Get Out of Dodge

By
JEANNE DRENNAN

Get Out of Dodge was first produced at the Venice Theatre in Venice, Fla., on Nov. 3, 2016, with the following cast:

Molly Hamilton..... Heather Forte
Chip Hamilton..... Tim Wisgerhof
Caroline Hamilton..... Rebecca Holahan
Phoebe Hamilton..... Megan Hartnett
Schuyler Reed..... Michael Campbell

Production:

Executive/Artistic Director Murray Chase
Producing Director Allan Kollar
Director Kathy J. Pingel
Assistant Director..... Rachel Weaver
Stage Manager Jennifer L. Woodford
Set Designer Frances Smetts
Sound Designers Dorian Boyd and Jaclyn Ledoux
Lighting Designer Christian Londos
Costume Designer Jonathan Hall
Props Designer Lisa Million
Technical Director..... John Andzulis
Production Manager..... Allan Kollar

In addition to the information on the Important Billing and Credit Requirements page (p. 3), all producers of the play must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“*Get Out of Dodge* was premiered in the American Association of Community Theatre’s AACT NewPlayFest at the Venice Theatre in Venice, Fla.”

Get Out of Dodge

CHARACTERS

MOLLY HAMILTON: 40; pianist and teacher of music.

CHIP HAMILTON: 40; Molly's husband; a landscape architect.

CAROLINE HAMILTON: 65; Chip's mother, really well turned out; a devoted grandmother.

PHOEBE HAMILTON: 16; Molly's and Chip's daughter; athletic and self-assured.

SCHUYLER REED: 62; Molly's father; formerly lean and spare but now softening a bit and losing the edge.

SETTING

A large family room in Molly's and Chip's house. The room should look so comfortable and welcoming that you might imagine the house's living and dining rooms are never used. Squashy sofa and armchairs, filled bookcases, a small dining table and chairs, excellent natural light with well cared for plants basking in it. No TV visible.

Exits to kitchen, front door, second floor, hallway leading to Molly's studio and to an exterior terrace.

The time is the recent past.

Get Out of Dodge

Scene 1

(Mid-July. About 9 o'clock in the evening.

PHOEBE HAMILTON lies on the sofa, fiddling with her music, earbuds in her ears. CAROLINE HAMILTON is putting dirty dishes from the table onto a tray. She drinks intermittently from a glass of white wine as she loads the tray. The wine bottle on the table is about three-quarters empty. A suitcase sits near the exit to the second floor; it still wears its destination labels for JFK.)

CAROLINE. Bellagio! Bel ... lag ... i ... o ... It even sounds romantic.

MOLLY *(from offstage, down the hall)*. It was beautiful, incredibly romantic.

CAROLINE. Lake Como ... I always wanted to go but somehow Eliot and I never got there, not to any of the Italian lakes. His ridiculous schedule, I suppose. Or it was the wrong season, or—something.

(MOLLY HAMILTON enters from the hall to her studio.)

MOLLY. Chip missed a lot, of course, because of his meetings.

CAROLINE. Naturally. Husbands always do. I must have been crazy to tag along with Eliot to all those medical meetings. *(Raising her glass.)* My life at poolside.

MOLLY. It wasn't like that.

CAROLINE. Of course not. You were in Italy. I was at a Hilton pool.

MOLLY. No, I mean—how important it was for Chip. He got to meet these incredibly smart European innovators and hear about what they're doing. He got to show his designs to some of his heroes.

CAROLINE. Chip's too old to have heroes. *(She begins to top up her glass from the bottle, then stops.)* Does anyone want more of this wine before I finish it off? I don't want to be selfish.

MOLLY. Don't save any for me.

CAROLINE *(calling up toward the second floor)*. Chip! Should I save you some wine?

MOLLY. Phoebe, you're supposed to be helping your grandmother.

CAROLINE. Don't get up, darling. There's nothing for you to do.

MOLLY. Phoebe.

PHOEBE (*pulling out her earbuds*). What?

CAROLINE (*calling off*). Chip! More wine?

MOLLY. Your grandmother had a magnificent pizza waiting for us when we got home. You should help clean up.

PHOEBE. I already helped, didn't I, Miu-Miu?

CAROLINE. Of course you did, darling.

PHOEBE. I grated cheese or something.

(PHOEBE abandons the music on the sofa, picks up the tray and exits to the kitchen with it.)

CAROLINE. Thank you, darling. (*Pours half the remaining wine into her glass.*) I doubt if he wants any more.

MOLLY. We can open another bottle if he does.

(MOLLY kneels at the suitcase, roots around in it.)

CAROLINE. Phoebe should rest. You spent the day relaxing in business class all the way from Milan.

(PHOEBE enters, minus the tray.)

MOLLY. We were in coach, thanks. But at least we got into the section where there's room for your legs. (*To PHOEBE.*) You weren't gone long enough to load the dishwasher.

PHOEBE (*returning to the sofa*). You always rearrange the dishes anyway, so I'm cutting out the middleman.

CAROLINE. But you weren't working on the plane, not physically. That El Greco works the swim team very hard, doesn't he, love?

MOLLY. El Greco?

CAROLINE. Oh, I think his name is Dmitri but somebody started calling him El Greco and he actually seemed to like it. So it stuck.

MOLLY. He's Greek?

PHOEBE. He's Serbian.

CAROLINE. Are you sure? I thought he was Russian.

PHOEBE. Serbian. Positive.

CAROLINE. Anyway, El Greco drives the team very hard. Then after lunch, she takes tennis lessons. And today she finished up with a Pilates class. So she's tired.

PHOEBE. I'm not tired. I wasn't the one drinking tequila sunrises at lunch.

MOLLY. Don't tease your grandmother. Really, Caroline? Tequila sunrises?

CAROLINE. We're working our way through the cocktail list, and I have to say the tequila sunrise doesn't rank very high. And I'm sure I had only one.

(CHIP HAMILTON enters from the second floor.)

CHIP. Sorry. I was in the bathroom.

CAROLINE. Airline food.

CHIP. I hardly ate. I knew you'd have something terrific waiting for us. *(To MOLLY.)* This ready to go up?

MOLLY. I'm still finding the souvenirs.

PHOEBE. Oh goody—presents.

MOLLY. One present—for you, anyway. Here, got 'em.

(MOLLY hands presents wrapped in tissue to CAROLINE and PHOEBE. CAROLINE pulls a big square silk scarf from the tissue.)

CAROLINE. Oh, beautiful! But you spent too much. This has to be a Versace.

MOLLY. I didn't spend too much. The woman promised it would fool anybody but an expert.

PHOEBE. You're not supposed to buy counterfeit stuff, Mom.

MOLLY. It's not counterfeit. It doesn't say Versace anywhere on it.

PHOEBE. It's being passed off as a Versace and you knew that because the seller told you.

CHIP. Stop picking on your mother.

CAROLINE *(modeling the scarf)*. And stop trying to spoil my present. It's Versace in spirit.

PHOEBE. But we're always being lectured at school about being our "authentic selves." And then our parents go and buy something they know is a knock-off.

CHIP. I said, stop picking on your mother. She's had a hard enough time today.

MOLLY. I didn't have a hard time. Let's move on, OK?

CAROLINE. May I at least say thank you?

MOLLY. Of course, I'm sorry. I just meant everything was fine. I didn't have a hard time.

CHIP. You did. I was ready to strangle that guy at immigration.

PHOEBE. What? Did he think you were smuggling drugs?

CHIP. Immigration, not customs. You're just showing your passport.

(MOLLY returns to the suitcase, rearranging the contents.)

MOLLY. It wasn't so bad.

CHIP. It was so bad. He keeps her standing there while he taps away at his keyboard until another agent comes out and says Mom has to go with him—for an interview. I couldn't go with her, I had to sit on a bench in the hall.

CAROLINE. You don't mean it. That's outrageous.

CHIP. And you have no rights. No right to have an attorney present, your husband, anyone.

PHOEBE *(overlapping)*. So what did they ask you?

MOLLY. About stuff that's in my passport. Stuff I know. Repeatedly. If they were trying to trip me up, they needed to ask harder questions.

PHOEBE. Like what?

MOLLY. I don't know. Like, where my mother was born. I know the state—Montana, but I'm not sure where she grew up. I only mean that they wouldn't have to go very far to make me seem—uncertain, or guilty.

PHOEBE. Wow, Mom. Do they think you're running a meth lab or something?

MOLLY. They didn't ask me about a meth lab.

PHOEBE. And they didn't say why?—I mean, why you?

MOLLY. They don't have to explain anything. After a while, they said I could go.

CAROLINE. Your name's gotten onto some kind of list. You'd better make sure it gets off it.

MOLLY. I think they pick people at random. *(She closes the suitcase; to PHOEBE.)* So do you like your present? So far as we know they're not counterfeit anything.

CAROLINE. Show me, love.

PHOEBE. Look, all these little blank notebooks with marbled covers. And the paper is beautiful. Of course I like them.

(CHIP grabs the suitcase.)

CHIP. Finished?

MOLLY. It's all yours.

(CHIP exits upstairs with the suitcase.)

PHOEBE. Didn't you get anything for Ethan?

MOLLY. It's in there somewhere. We can take it to him on Sunday.

PHOEBE. Is it visiting day already?

MOLLY. Yes. You don't sound very enthusiastic.

CAROLINE. Of course she's enthusiastic—aren't you, darling?

PHOEBE. It's creepy. All those girls with their creepy little buns?
It's not even ten percent boys.

MOLLY. That's normal for a ballet camp.

PHOEBE. And I may be busy on Sunday. Some kids from the club are talking about going sailing.

MOLLY. We can talk about it.

PHOEBE *(starting an exit to the second floor)*. I know what I'm doing. I went to sailing camp in June, remember?

CAROLINE. Are we on the same schedule for tomorrow? Swim practice at ten?

PHOEBE. I guess.

CAROLINE. I'll pick you up at nine-fifteen.

(CHIP enters from the second floor.)

MOLLY. I can bring her. Why should you do all that driving?

CAROLINE. It's fine, it keeps me busy.

MOLLY. Or sleep in the guestroom and you won't have to come back. You always say you love that room.

CAROLINE. It's beautiful, but I like sleeping in my own bed. With Marigold.

CHIP. Stay. Cats are really self-sufficient. Even Marigold.

MOLLY. It's dark already—and you know what the deer are like.

CAROLINE. So long as they don't give me Lyme disease again I have no argument with the deer.

PHOEBE. It's not the deer, it's the deer tick.

CAROLINE. I'm quite aware of that, darling. *(She takes a sip from her wine glass.)* Nine-fifteen. Be ready.

MOLLY. I'm going up with Phoebe to unpack. You're sure you won't stay?

CAROLINE. Positive.

MOLLY. Then be careful. The pizza was perfect—thank you. And thanks for taking care of everything while we were gone, especially Phoebe.

(MOLLY gives CAROLINE a hug and kiss. She and PHOEBE begin the exit.)

CAROLINE. You know I love having her.

PHOEBE. You're lucky they didn't find that counterfeit scarf in your luggage.

MOLLY. It's not counterfeit. Think of it as—an *homage*, like in music. An *homage* to Versace, a compliment, almost an expression of reverence.

PHOEBE *(overlapping)*. I know what an homage is, Mom.

(They exit to the second floor.)

CHIP *(a beat)*. Why don't you stay?

CAROLINE. I didn't drink too much, if that's what you're worrying about.

CHIP. I didn't say anything about your drinking.

CAROLINE. But that's what you meant.

CHIP *(shrugs)*. We've both noticed that you've been drinking more since Dad left.

(CAROLINE gathers up her things.)

CAROLINE. If I'm drinking more, it's probably just in celebration. I heard today at lunch—over a tequila sunrise—that Lucy hates San Diego.

CHIP. Dad says she's getting used to it. At least that's what he said before we left.

CAROLINE. That's what he'd tell you. Lucy would tell her old friends the truth. And the truth, apparently, is that your father is busy being the new star in the hospital system, and Lucy is at loose ends. Or should that be Lucy-ends? She's completely cut off from her old friends—like me. It's funny how betrayal does that.

CHIP. Let's hope she doesn't turn to drink.

CAROLINE. Touché. (*Beginning an exit, then stopping.*) You really should encourage Molly to find out what's going on with this problem at immigration. You don't want that to happen every time you come back from anywhere. Why don't you talk to your sister about it—or better, get Molly to call her.

CHIP. She does real estate. You can't expect her to be up on immigration law or whatever you'd call this.

CAROLINE. I'd call it—basic human rights. Of course, if this was going to happen to someone in the family, Molly would be the someone.

CHIP. And you think that ... why?

CAROLINE. Be realistic, Chip. Who turns up as a Princeton freshman, alone, on a bus, with one suitcase?

CHIP. Seriously? You're reaching back ... twenty-three, twenty-four years?

(*CAROLINE shrugs.*)

CHIP (*cont'd*). Would you feel better if she'd turned up in an overstuffed SUV with Connecticut plates?

CAROLINE. Almost certainly. (*Resuming the exit.*) Now I'm really leaving. And if you tell me to be careful, I'll scream.

CHIP. Good night, Mother. Thanks for dinner.

(*CAROLINE exits.*)

Scene 2

(*The next morning.*)

The room has been restored to order. From MOLLY's studio a recording is playing loudly, something quasi-heroic like the theme from The Magnificent Seven. From the front of the house, a doorbell rings.)

PHOEBE (*from upstairs*). Mom! (*A beat.*) Mom! Somebody's at the door!

(The doorbell rings again. A beat. Another ring. PHOEBE enters from upstairs, already dressed.)

PHOEBE (*cont'd*). Mom!

(She exits in the direction of the front door. A longish pause. The music continues.)

PHOEBE (*cont'd, offstage*). She's back here.

(PHOEBE enters, followed by SCHUYLER REED. He carries a duffel the size of a gym bag.)

PHOEBE (*cont'd*). You can—wait here, I guess.

SCHUYLER. Thank you.

PHOEBE. You said—Idaho?

SCHUYLER. Yes. An old friend from Idaho. Thank you.

PHOEBE. OK.

(PHOEBE exits down the hall. A pause. SCHUYLER takes in the room until the music stops. A pause. MOLLY enters, followed by PHOEBE.)

SCHUYLER. Hello, Molly.

MOLLY (*a beat*). Hello. (*A beat.*) Phoebe—? You've got your stuff?

(PHOEBE picks up her sunglasses from a table and puts them on.)

PHOEBE. Everything's there. I have a locker. I mean, Miu-Miu has a locker.

(From outside, a car horn sounds.)

PHOEBE (*cont'd*). That's her.

MOLLY. You'd better go then.

(PHOEBE starts an exit toward the front of the house.)

MOLLY (*cont'd*). Wait. Phoebe, this is Schuyler. From back home.

PHOEBE. Hi.

SCHUYLER. Hello, Phoebe.

PHOEBE (*backing off*). So, bye.

MOLLY. Wait—you forgot my hug.

(*PHOEBE hugs MOLLY and exits. A pause.*)

MOLLY. Twenty-three years.

SCHUYLER. I guess. That's a beautiful child you got, that Phoebe.

MOLLY. Never mind my child. Where the hell were you?

SCHUYLER. Mexico.

MOLLY. Mexico.

SCHUYLER. Mostly in and around Guanajuato. That's pretty much in the center of the country.

MOLLY. When you headed out, you were less than a hundred miles from Canada. I figured you'd head for the border. But Mexico?

SCHUYLER. When I pulled out, of course I thought Canada. And then I thought, well, so will the feds. So I made a U-turn, headed south and kept going.

MOLLY. It's got to be a thousand miles.

SCHUYLER. I wasn't counting. You didn't need a passport. It was all, "So long, have a nice visit." I thought, any minute now they're gonna to pull me over—but it was OK.

MOLLY. Uncle Tuck told them you'd taken the blue Chevy.

SCHUYLER. How could I? Somebody stole that Chevy maybe six, seven months earlier.

MOLLY. Sure, but you didn't report it.

SCHUYLER. What for? Never was worth a damn.

MOLLY. It took them three days to find out it was sitting on a lot in South Dakota. That bought you some time.

SCHUYLER. Good for Tuck, then. But I'm surprised the fellow got that far.

MOLLY (*a beat*). I'm waiting to hear why you never called.

SCHUYLER. That's a little harder.

MOLLY. I've got all day. (*A beat.*) You look tired. There's—uh, fresh coffee still hot in the kitchen.

SCHUYLER. Thanks.

(*MOLLY starts an exit, stops.*)

MOLLY. You still take it black?

SCHUYLER. You got it.

(MOLLY exits to the kitchen. SCHUYLER takes in the room again—the books on the shelves, family photos. MOLLY re-enters with two mugs of coffee and hands one to SCHUYLER.)

SCHUYLER (*cont'd*). This is real nice, Molly, a nice place.

MOLLY. It's home. Where did you sleep?

SCHUYLER. Greyhound bus.

MOLLY. From—?

SCHUYLER. Fort Smith. You know, Arkansas.

MOLLY. You've got friends there, huh?

SCHUYLER. I got a ride with somebody who's got a house there. Last bus got me into New York around five. A nice lady at a desk told me how to get to the train station. She mapped the whole thing out.

MOLLY. Miss Ellen called to say you were looking for me.

SCHUYLER. That's right, I called her for your address.

MOLLY. Six weeks ago, because that's when she called me. You must have been having a nice time with this friend in Fort Smith.

SCHUYLER. Miss Ellen's real proud of you, Molly. She said you went off with a scholarship to Princeton University.

MOLLY. That was Miss Baker's doing.

SCHUYLER. Martha Baker? At the high school? I didn't think of trying her.

MOLLY. She's the principal now.

SCHUYLER. Principal? Son of a gun.

MOLLY. She's got my address, but she wouldn't have given it to you.

SCHUYLER. That's how I remember her. All high and mighty. I'm not surprised she pushed you into a snooty college all the way across the country.

MOLLY. She said the distance would give me a better chance of getting in.

SCHUYLER. How's that?

MOLLY. They want what's called regional diversity. So if a kid from Idaho applies with good grades and good scores, they're pretty happy about it.

SCHUYLER. How about that.

MOLLY. And if her father's a fugitive, they get even happier.

SCHUYLER. Huh. Is that something you have to put in the application?

MOLLY. There was a personal essay. You write about yourself—like, what’s made you who you are so far. You gave me a lot to work with.

SCHUYLER. Good thing I run out before you had to put in your application.

MOLLY. That’s what I thought. (*A beat.*) They know you’re here. Not here in this house but back in the states.

SCHUYLER. They can’t know. Miss Ellen wouldn’t call them.

MOLLY. They know. I just got back from Europe and they gave me a real hard time at immigration.

SCHUYLER. Europe, huh? You traveling to Europe now? That’s pretty fancy.

MOLLY. You’re missing the point. They asked about you. Did I know where you were. Did I know whether you were alive. That’s never happened before.

SCHUYLER. You didn’t tell them about Miss Ellen calling?

MOLLY. They didn’t ask if Miss Ellen called. I did what Uncle Tuck told me to do while we were waiting for the ambulance to come for Hector. Answer only the questions they ask, and answer yes or no. Tell the truth, but don’t be too quick to think you know what’s true.

SCHUYLER. That sounds like Tuck.

MOLLY (*a beat*). Twenty-three years is a long time to go without calling. Without sending even a postcard.

SCHUYLER. I guess it is. This is good coffee.

MOLLY. It’s Mexican.

SCHUYLER. I thought so. (*A beat.*) Look—I don’t know how much you remember.

MOLLY. I remember plenty.

SCHUYLER. Then you know everything started sooner—right after I lost the Silver Spring property and the whole five of us had to move in with Tuck. It wasn’t just Hector showing up to serve a warrant over that thing at the autobody.

MOLLY. That thing at the autobody? You mean you picking up a pipe wrench and breaking every windshield in the place because you didn’t like your bill.

SCHUYLER. I *said*—it’d been going on for a while.