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Dramatic Publishing

Geezers



Drama/Comedy

by

Tommy Lee Johnston

“A great story with beautiful characters, poetic language and themes that will touch and reverberate in your soul for a long time to come.” —*Showbiz Chicago*

Geezers

Drama/Comedy. By Tommy Lee Johnston. Cast: 5m., 5w. *Geezers* introduces us to some beautiful and wonderful old people who are enjoying their golden years in a retirement home. Jack, a pathologically shy, 27-year-old man, begins a job there helping the seniors with their daily needs. But it’s the “geezers” who wind up helping Jack with his needs. On his road to an epiphany, Jack learns from the old folks that he must break out of his comfort zone to achieve anything in life. Jack learns to crawl—then walk, then fly—with a wise group of mentors guiding him along. A funny, heart-warming drama about growth and wisdom, learning and loving, life and death. “*Geezers* isn’t a standard memory play but a fresh, warm journey of awakening or reawakening that finds each of the characters working out what roles they play throughout their lives.” (*Chicago Critic*) *Unit set. Approximate running time: 2 hours. Code: GC8.*

*Redtwist Theatre, Chicago, featuring (l-r)
Brian Perry, Aaron Kirby, Bruce Cronander and Donna Steel.
Photographer: Nicole Johnston. Cover design: Susan Carle.*

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Geezers

By

TOMMY LEE JOHNSTON



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(GEEZERS)

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Geezers had its world premiere at Redtwist Theatre in Chicago from July 26 to Sept. 7, 2014.

CAST:

Gina.....	Jacqueline Grandt
Ray	Bruce Cronander
Jack	Aaron Kirby
Emily.....	Kathleen Ruhl
Neil.....	Brian Perry
Kate	Donna Steele
Jenny	Debra Rodkin
Young Kate	Julie Dahlinger
Young Neil	Caleb Fortune
Young Ray.....	Michael Bartz

PRODUCTION:

Director	Jan Ellen Graves
Assistant Director.....	Elyse Dolan
Stage Manager	Allison Queen
Assistant Stage Manager.....	Kathryn Haynes
Scenic Design.....	Eric Luchen
Scenic Assistants	Marla Darrow, Kevin Meece
Lighting Design	David Federman
Lighting Consultant	Eric J. Vigo
Costume Designer	Sarah Jo White
Sound Design	Robert Eric Shoemaker
Dramaturg	Kevin McDonald
Casting Director	Jessie Chappe
Graphics/Marketing/Programs.....	Jan Ellen Graves
Producers.....	Michael Colucci, Jan Ellen Graves
Associate Producer.....	Johnny Garcia

Geezers

CHARACTERS

JACK: Introverted 27-year-old Jack has never held a formal job in his life. He has spent most of his adult life home caring for his ailing deaf mother. He is proficient in American Sign Language, which he prefers to actually speaking, at times unknowingly signing as he speaks to others. His anxiety makes it difficult to communicate outside of his own world.

GINA: Mid- to late 40s, a nurse practitioner, she carries the title of coordinator at Maple Leaf Retirement Community. She has a hard edge about her, taking her job of caring for the residents very seriously.

RAY: In his 70s, he loves to sleep in the recliner of the community room at Maple Leaf. He constantly carries his pillow with him as a companion. He has mastered the art of dropping in and out of conversations as he sleeps.

YOUNG RAY: Ray in his early 30s.

KATE: Former actress now in her mid-70s, she is always onstage. Still vibrant, she'll never pass up the opportunity to speak of her early glory days as an actress. She runs the roost at Maple Leaf, constantly looking to catch the eye of any breathing man who may be in the room.

YOUNG KATE: Kate in her early 20s

NEIL: In his 70s, walks with a cane. A bit of a curmudgeon, he's quick witted and loves to verbally jab anyone within earshot. Former Air Force veteran, he holds his past military service with pride.

YOUNG NEIL: Neil in his mid-30s

EMILY: In her 90s, Miss Emily suffers from dementia. She spends many hours watching television, singing along to the commercial jingles. She has moments of great lucidity and physically moves well with the aid of a walker.

JENNY: Mid- to late 60s, Jenny resides very near Maple Leaf. She is a regular visitor of Miss Emily.

Geezers

ACT I

SCENE 1

(Present day. Summer. Maple Leaf Retirement Community. Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong's "Dream a Little Dream of Me" plays above. Lights up on a small room. Similar to a classroom, it has a few fold-out chairs in a semi-circle and two recliners on opposite corners. RAY, a man in his 70s, deeply sleeps on one of the recliners. His head rests on a pillow. The television hanging from a wall is on with the volume down. A small table on the same wall is home to a record player spinning out the scratchy music. GINA, a nurse, walks in and surveys the room. She walks over to RAY and places her hand on his shoulder.)

GINA. Raymond.

(RAY stirs a bit. He lays his head on her hand and smiles. GINA walks to the TV and turns it off. She walks to the record player; lifts the arm off the record, removes it and places it in its sleeve. She turns the player off.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. Ray, it's late.

(He does not move. GINA folds up the few chairs and places them against a wall. She walks to RAY.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. Ray?

RAY *(still asleep)*. I love you.

(GINA smiles.)

RAY *(cont'd, still asleep)*. I do love you. *(He snorts and stirs once again)*.

GINA. All right, Raymond, let me take you back to your room.

(She gives him a good shake.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. Let's go to bed, Ray.

RAY *(still asleep)*. Oh good, your place or mine?

GINA. Let's go to your place.

(RAY finally opens his eyes. He is a bit groggy. GINA puts her hand out to him. He takes it and slowly stands. Once up, he puts his arms around GINA's waist and places his head on her shoulder.)

RAY. Are we dancing?

GINA. No, we're going to bed.

RAY *(head still on her shoulder)*. Even better.

GINA. To sleep, Ray, you're going to bed to sleep.

(RAY pauses for a moment. He wakes fully, lifts his head and looks at GINA.)

RAY. Oh, it's you.

GINA. Let me help you to your room.

RAY. I can find my own room.

GINA. Can I walk with you, Ray?

(RAY does not answer. He motions to the chair for his pillow. GINA grabs it and hands it to him. RAY exits on his own. GINA walks back into the room and straightens a few last things before sitting down in RAY's chair. She removes a handkerchief from her pocket, takes a deep breath and

conjures up a cry. It's an intense yet quick cry that stops as quickly as it started. GINA puts the handkerchief back into her pocket, stands and straightens a blanket on RAY's chair. She scans the room to make sure all is OK. Satisfied, she exits.)

SCENE 2

(Next day, same room. GINA is seated at the desk. JACK, 27, sits opposite her. GINA is looking through some paperwork on the desk. JACK looks at his feet.)

GINA. I knew your mother.

(JACK does not answer.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. I was very sorry when I heard she passed.

(Still no answer. GINA looks up to JACK. She shuffles through the papers on the desk.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. Our coordinator, Mr. Edwards, thought you might be a nice fit here.

(No answer.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. I don't see a résumé?

(No answer. She looks up at him once again.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. You understand this is an interview?

(He finally looks up.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. You know what happens in an interview?

(Slight Pause.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. You do know, don't you, Jack?

(JACK gives GINA a blank stare.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. Do you speak, Jack?

JACK *(softly)*. Yes ma'am. I'm sorry; I didn't realize you were asking me questions.

GINA. You don't have a résumé?

(Beat.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. That was a question.

JACK. No ma'am. I've never had a job before.

GINA. You're 27.

JACK. Was that a question?

GINA. No. Certainly you've had one job in your life?

(Beat.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. That was a question.

JACK. No. Well yes, sort of. I'm a writer. I want to be a writer. I do write, and I took care of my mom at home until she passed.

GINA. Oh, I see. You have problems communicating, don't you, Jack?

JACK. Question?

(GINA nods.)

JACK *(cont'd)*. I really don't do this much. Talk. To people I mean.

(Beat. JACK suddenly and nervously speed talks.)

JACK *(cont'd)*. My mother was deaf ... Well, you know. It was just my mom and me, so there wasn't a lot of talking in my house growing up. I know two languages, English and ASL, or American Sign Language. I spent most of my

time as an interpreter for Mom ... I much prefer sign language. She loved me, wanted the best for me, but I found I enjoyed the quiet of our home. I've been encouraged to get out, since she died ...

(Pause.)

JACK *(cont'd)*. Sorry. I'm nervous. Mr. Edwards expressed to me that I had this job. He and my mom were very close friends. He thought this job could be good for me; he thought being around people could be good for my anxiety. I have anxiety. People make me anxious. He thought this might be a good place to get past that. He did say I had this job, and said meeting you was just a formality?

(Beat.)

JACK *(cont'd)*. That was a question.

GINA. Yes, he expressed that to me too. Can you start today?

JACK. Oh.

GINA. You'll be working afternoons into early evenings. It's not difficult work. I can give you a tour and a crash course now.

JACK. I'm not really prepared to start today.

GINA. There's not a lot to prepare.

JACK. I'm not ready. I need to go home and get ready. Mentally ready.

(Beat. GINA stands and gathers her things.)

GINA. Can you mentally prepare yourself by 4 p.m. tomorrow?

(JACK nods. GINA begins her exit. JACK remains seated. GINA stops at the door and turns back to him.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. You can go home. I'll meet you back here tomorrow.

(JACK nods and stands. They both exit. Lights fade.)

SCENE 3

(Lights in. JACK follows GINA into the rec room. He is wearing a backpack as she gives him a run-down of his duties. Nervously looking around, he is easily distracted. His attention is drawn to the record player.)

GINA. ... You know this room; this is where our residents spend some of their time. Mostly just sit and talk, watch a little TV, occasionally play cards. This is where we need you. *(She looks over at JACK. Pause.)* Are you listening to me, Jack? This is where we need you. You can use my desk.

JACK *(softly)*. OK.

GINA. Excuse me?

JACK *(a little louder)*. OK.

GINA. Just watch over them. Some are weaker than others, not good balance, especially getting in and out of chairs. A small group usually gathers after dinner, most will go to bed from here. There's no smoking, you can leave once they've all gone to their rooms. Not many late nights around here.

JACK *(softly)*. I don't mind late nights.

GINA. I'm sorry?

JACK *(louder)*. I don't mind late nights.

GINA. Bit of advice for you, Jack, this is a retirement community; average age of our residents is about 75. I understand the circumstances from which you came, but you're gonna have to punch up the volume a little.

JACK *(louder yet)*. I'll try to remember that!

GINA. I can hear just fine, but I appreciate you taking direction. Despite not being able to hear, your mom had an incredible capacity to communicate with our residents. She was great with them. I hope to see that in you.

(Beat.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. Do you have any questions?

JACK. No.

GINA. They'll be very curious about you, ask you a lot of questions, especially the ladies. It's OK to talk. They like that. If you need anything, if there's a problem, hit the buzzer on the wall, someone will come.

(JACK removes a pad of paper and pencil from his bag and takes notes.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. You shouldn't have too many problems.

(GINA begins to exit.)

JACK. You think they'll ask me questions?

(GINA stops and turns.)

JACK *(cont'd)*. Not good with questions, that's all.

GINA. Do your best. *(Begins her exit, stops again.)* Oh, they'll probably ask you about Terrence. He's the guy you're replacing; they'll want to know what happened to him. He was very much liked by the residents. Most think he's been on vacation.

JACK. What happened to him?

GINA. Fraternization, it's not allowed. He was fired. It's best they don't know.

JACK. Fraternization?

GINA. The residents are free to date and socialize with each other, not the staff. Do you have a thing for older people, Jack?

JACK. A thing?

GINA. Do you like? Are you attracted? Never mind.

JACK. What should I tell them if they ask?

GINA. Just tell them he decided to move on and ...

(JACK holds his finger up, asking GINA to pause as he jots it down.)

JACK. Move on?

GINA. And that's all you know.

(JACK finishes writing out his instructions.)

GINA *(cont'd)*. Good. Dinner is wrapping up about now, you should have a few begin to make their way here soon. Make yourself at home, I'll check in with you in a bit.

(GINA begins her exit.)

JACK. You're not staying? Here with me?

GINA *(beat)*. The whole idea behind hiring you is so I don't have to do this job. You have to show me you can do this, Jack. You understand? Don't worry, they don't bite. Often.

(GINA exits. JACK looks around the room. He removes his backpack and places it on a chair next to the desk. He takes out a pad of paper, a pencil and a book, placing them all on the desk. He walks the room, stopping at the record player. He turns it on and places the needle on the record. He listens. EMILY, pushing a walker, walks in slowly. JACK does not see her. EMILY, oblivious to JACK, takes a seat in a recliner. JACK turns the record player off. He turns and is startled by EMILY. He watches her for a moment, waiting to be seen. RAY enters slightly hunched over and carrying his pillow.

He squints to see EMILY in the recliner and then up to JACK. RAY takes a seat in the other chair. JACK steps behind the desk to give himself a protective barrier between them.)

RAY *(does not look up)*. Hey, Terry.

(JACK doesn't know what to do. He looks down at his pad.)

RAY *(cont'd)*. We had steak today. At least that's what they called that clump of gray crap.

JACK *(softly)*. Oh ... no, he ...

RAY. How are you?

JACK *(quietly)*. Fine?

RAY. How 'bout those Bears?

JACK *(softly still)*. Oh, no, I'm not Terr ...

RAY. What's that, Terry?

JACK *(louder)*. Yeah, I don't know about that.

RAY. You said it, buddy, who can figure it.

NEIL *(entering with a cane)*. Who the hell are you?

(EMILY and RAY finally look up.)

RAY. Oh shit!

JACK. Sorry, I didn't mean to scare you ...

RAY. Where's Terrence?

JACK. Terrence? *(He looks down at his pad and reads directly off the page.)* He's decided to move on ...

EMILY. Terrence? Who's Terrence?

RAY *(to EMILY)*. Terry. *(To JACK.)* Where's Terry?

JACK *(starts over)*. He decided to move on ...

EMILY. I don't know. Who's Terrence?

RAY. Terry is Terrence.

NEIL. Who the hell are you?

JACK. I'm Jack.

RAY. Is he coming back?

JACK *(reading)*. He decided to move ...

EMILY. Who?

RAY. Terry?

NEIL. No, he's not coming back.

EMILY. Who?

RAY. Terrence, why?

JACK *(this time quickly to get it all in)*. He decided to move on and that's all I know ...

NEIL. Ha! Bullshit! He was moving on all right, all over Kate. Gina walked in on them, right here in this room.

RAY. What, when?

NEIL. Last week ... Monday ... right there on that desk.

(JACK quickly moves away from the desk. He takes a pack of wipes from his backpack and starts to wipe the table down.)

RAY. Monday? I was here then, I didn't see anything.

NEIL. You were right there, doing what you always do. Sleep. Bomb could go off, Ray!

EMILY. Who the fuck is Terrence?

(Silence. NEIL and RAY break into laughter.)

NEIL. You're the new guy?

(JACK nods.)

NEIL *(cont'd)*. We haven't had a new guy around here in a while, right, Ray?

(RAY and NEIL exchange a quick glance to each other.)

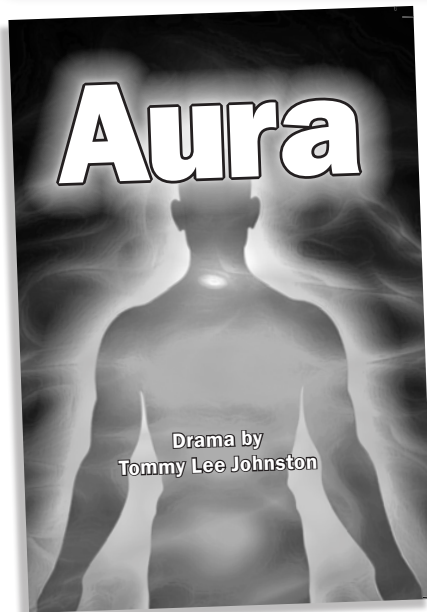
RAY. You're right we haven't. It has been a while.

(KATE enters. RAY coughs.)

NEIL. New guy, Kate.

KATE. I heard. Hello.

Also available from Tommy Lee Johnston



Highly Recommended.

“A marvelous new work.”
(steadstylechicago.com)

“An excellent play—filled with humor, memorable characters and a thought provoking theme.”

(Chicagocritic.com)

Aura is the story of a pure soul, an eccentric man named Mike who can see color auras surrounding others, revealing their vitality—or imminent demise. It is a probing exploration of

how Mike copes with knowledge that one should not even possess, let alone share. How does a thoughtful person live from day to day with a gift/curse of soul-wracking sensitivity and mind-numbing thoughtfulness such as this? Earl, a still young and vital senior struggling with his wife's recent death, meets Mike on his daily walk in the park, and Earl's world is forever transformed. Amanda, a young mom, and Dr. Emily Wallace, a psychiatrist to whom Mike turns for help with his unique visions, are both profoundly affected by Mike and are drawn to this kind and peculiar man with unique gifts.

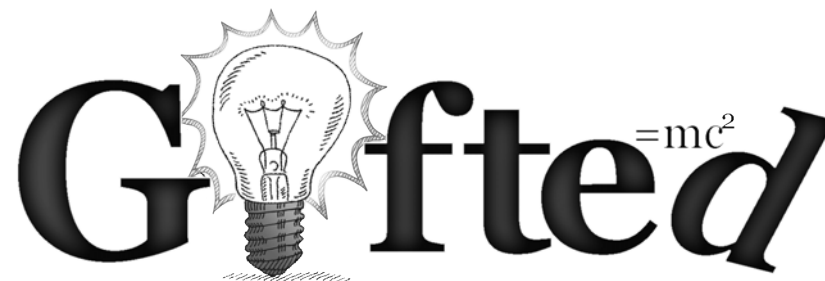
Play Details:

Cast: 2m., 2w.

Flexible set.

Approximate running time: 75 minutes.

Code: AK5.



“Warmly and instantly accessible for anyone from 8 to 80, yet possesses a richness and depth of understanding that transcends age as it speaks directly to the collective human spirit. ... It is a rare gem for children and an utter delight for adults. Tommy Lee Johnston has truly given us a gift.”

(Michael Colucci, Redtwist Theatre)

Mr. Jenks revisits his high-school alma mater as a substitute teacher for a class of highly gifted students. Discovering the passage of time hasn't erased his own painful experiences as a bully, he now faces a class of kids whose lives and experiences all too closely resemble those of the very students he taunted. Zach, Maggie, Jake, Janie, Jamie and James all struggle in their own way with their gift of intellect and the impact it has on their social standing in life and school. Their stories of being bullied quickly take Mr. Jenks back to a time of much shame and pain. He must face his feelings while helping the students understand the senselessness of bullying, and he will deliver news to the students that will force them to see life in a whole new way. *Gifted* moves at a fast clip, revealing the day-to-day drama and humor these kids live. It's a story of love, respect, devotion, extreme forgiveness and embracing one's own gift.

Play Details:

Cast: 4m., 3w.

Simple set.

Approximate running time: 70 minutes.

Code: GC6.