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Dramatic Publishing



FRATERNITY

By
STEVE KARP



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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In March 2001, a first draft of *Fraternity* was given three staged reading performances at Stamford Theatre Works in STW's Windows on the Works, new play development workshop program in Stamford, Connecticut.

As part of Stamford Theatre Works' 2004-2005 full-production season, *Fraternity* premiered on April 27, 2005, with the following:

Noel Richards	IAN BLACKMAN
Sam Katz	MATTHEW DECAPUA
Don Curtis	JAKE MOSSER
Betsy Kay	JAMIE PROCTOR
Eddie Solomon	JASON SCHUCHMAN
Larry Clinton	MARK THORNTON

PRODUCTION STAFF

Producing Director	STEVE KARP
Managing Director	LARRY FRENCK
Director	STEVE KARP
Casting Director	LIZ ORTIZ-MACKES
Production Stage Manager	CHRISTIAN SAINT-GIRARD
Scenic Design	PATRICK MCCLUSKEY
Lighting Design	AARON MEADOW
Sound Design	CHRISTOPHER GRANGER
Costume Design	ELAINE B. GOVIA
Props/Set Decoration	PEARL BROMS
Technical Director	JOHN MOSELE
Graphic Artist	BOB CALLAHAN

Fraternity's scheduled performance run was to May 15, 2005, but due to demand, the run was extended to May 22, 2005. At Stamford Theatre Works, *Fraternity* ran for twenty-six total performances and established a new seventeen-year STW audience attendance record.

Playwright's Notes

Fraternity takes place in 1961-'62 on the campus of a co-ed university located just outside of Boston. It is performed in a continuous series of scenes that utilize multiple, conceptualized campus locations, cross-fading lights, appropriate music and sound effects, and characters who move directly from one scene into the next. With perhaps only a few exceptions, there should be no scene blackouts until the very end. The play is performed without intermission.

While the set can be of very simple design, it must be capable of delineating the various locations called for in the play. In Stamford, our conceptualized set consisted of two decks on each side of the stage connected by a bridge. The stage right decks were Sam and Eddie's dorm rooms, the stage left decks were the Delta Phi Delta fraternity. On top of the bridge were placed two chairs for Sam and Betsy's lecture hall scenes. In the open area below the bridge and between the stage right and left decks was the "general campus area" where all of the other scenes took place including the student snack bar, university hangout, vestibule of Betsy's dorm, the Delt brotherhood meeting, Sam's fraternity "hell week," and final Delt induction ceremony.

In the Stamford Theatre Works production, each of the characters entered with the opening music and moved about the conceptualized set in a briefly choreographed "dumb show" as if it were the first day of classes. The "dumb show" finished with Sam and Betsy moving into their chairs to start the scene in the lecture hall, as the opening music faded out. While different directors may have different ideas of how to start the play, we found this way to be very effective in helping to establish not only the "campus environment," but the various locations on our conceptualized set.

FRATERNITY

Amidst the backdrop of dramatic change in the 1960s, a Jewish freshman at a New England college is rushed by a fraternity trying to overcome its anti-Semitic traditions.

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

SAM KATZ 18, college freshman; athletic; Jewish.

BETSY KAY . . . 18, college freshman; Jewish (but doesn't look it).

EDDIE SOLOMON . 18, college freshman; athletic; Sam's roommate; Jewish.

DON CURTIS . . 20, college junior, a stand-out tackle on the varsity football team; tall, physically imposing, blond; rush chairman of the Delta Phi Delta fraternity; WASP.

LARRY CLINTON. . . 21, college senior; president of the Delta Phi Delta fraternity; WASP.

NOEL RICHARDS . . . 55, successful businessman; current chapter advisor of the Delta Phi Delta fraternity; past president of the Delta Phi Delta national fraternity; current member of the university's board of trustees; WASP.

Sam Katz in 1961 is a freshman university student, aspiring football player, and Jewish. He is invited by Don Curtis, a standout player on the varsity football team, to consider pledging the Delta Phi Delta fraternity. Sam, persuaded by Don's charisma as an upper classman and star football player, is interested in joining. Delta Phi Delta, however, being one of the oldest national fraternities in the country, with its origin in Deep South, restricts Jews. Sam's roommate, Eddie Solomon, is appalled that Sam would consider joining such a fraternity. But Sam is told by Don and Delta Phi Delta president, Larry Clinton, that the brotherhood wants to challenge these restrictions and needs Sam's commitment to join in order to start their challenge in motion. Eddie tells Sam that he is not convinced of Don and Larry's intentions, arguing that Sam is just being used as a "token Jew" so that the Delts can appear in compliance with the university's growing anti-discriminatory policies toward fraternities. When Don and Larry explain to their fraternity chapter advisor and former president of the Delta Phi Delta national organization, Noel Richards, that the fraternity's restrictions on Jews is hurting hurting recruitment, Noel insists on maintaining the Delt status quo as a Christian fraternity, thus causing Don and Larry to argue that the fraternity will fold unless it opens up its membership. Meanwhile, Sam pursues a romantic involvement with a freshman co-ed, Betsy Kay, who Sam is surprised to learn is actually Jewish. Sam's growing guilt and confusion concerning his own identity as a Jew, causes him to rethink his decision to join Delta Phi Delta. But his continued attraction to the fraternity, especially after the Delt brotherhood unanimously votes him in, leads Sam to research the Jewish scriptures, primarily the Old Testament, to seek justification for his decision to finally join. With Betsy's encouragement, and Don and Larry's ultimate success in convincing Noel that the Delts must change in order to survive, Sam, historically, is initiated into the fraternity.

(Lights up again on SAM AND EDDIE'S DORM ROOM, a few days later. DON CURTIS has just entered.)

DON. I haven't set foot inside West Hall in two years.

SAM. You used to live here?

DON. Second floor. Freshman year.

EDDIE. Is there any scarier lookin' dorm on campus?

DON. The old "House of Seven Gables"!

EDDIE. Even though it only has six.

SAM. Is it true that West Hall was really Hawthorne's inspiration?

EDDIE *(sarcastically)*. Yeah, right.

DON. I think if it was, they'd have a plaque out there on the wall and the university would be milkin' this building for all it was worth.

SAM. I suppose.

DON. But it *is* the oldest.

EDDIE. Yeah, they should have a plaque on the wall and be milkin' it just for that.

SAM. Yeah. (*They laugh.*)

DON. So, Sam...I am the bearer of good news. You're in!
I didn't even have to break anybody's arm... Congratulations! (*There is a moment of awkward silence.*)

SAM. ...Thanks, Don.

DON. Hey.

SAM. And thanks for coming to tell me yourself.

DON. Well, it's exciting. I wanted you to hear it directly from me.

SAM. I really appreciate that.

EDDIE (*not convincingly*). Congratulations, Sam.

SAM. Thanks.

DON. Eddie, I'm sorry you're not coming in, too. It would've been terrific to have you both.

EDDIE. Not my cup 'a tea.

DON. I understand.

SAM. How many guys did you finally take, Don?

DON. Twenty-three. It's a great pledge class.

SAM. I'll bet.

DON. And I'm sure you know most of them.

SAM. How many are Jewish?

DON. None.

SAM. Just me?

DON. You're the only one, Sam... Hey, it's a beginning.

SAM (*troubled*). Yeah.

DON. Whatsamatter?

SAM. Don, I know it's late for me to be saying this... But I've been giving this a lot more thought.

DON. What do you mean...?

SAM. Well...I'm not convinced this is really the right thing for me to do.

DON. Why?

SAM. Well...

DON. I thought you really wanted to do this?

SAM. I thought so, too.

DON. Sam, this is the first time in history that a Jew has been openly voted into this fraternity.

SAM. I know.

DON. Are you worried because you're the only one?

SAM. It just makes it harder.

DON. Sam, the vote was unanimous! We all want this. There are a lot of people who are putting this chapter on the line for you.

SAM. I know what you're doing for me.

EDDIE. I would've thought you'd be doing it for everybody.

DON. Obviously, we are, Eddie.

EDDIE. Well, you make it sound like you're doing Sam a favor.

DON. Look, we are trying to change things! For everybody!... We have opened a door, Sam. We need you to walk through it!... Look, I know it takes a lot 'a guts to do this.

EDDIE. It's not about guts.

DON. What's it about, Eddie?

EDDIE. History is full 'a Jews walking through doors... only to be trapped inside later on.

DON. OK, I understand that.

EDDIE. No, you don't. You can't. It's not your heritage!

DON. Do you have to be Jewish to understand that bigotry is wrong?

EDDIE. You have to be Jewish to understand why you can never trust anybody!

DON (*to SAM*). Is this how you feel? Do you not trust me?

SAM. It's not that I don't trust you, Don.

DON. Well, that's what Eddie is saying.

SAM. I need to be sure that I'm doing it for the right reason.

DON. What is the right reason?

EDDIE. That he's not joining an anti-Semitic fraternity!

SAM. Please, I can talk for myself!... It's really more about trusting me... I mean, I have to make sure that I'm not running away from anything...who I am, where I come from...

DON. But everybody knows who you are. It's not like we're trying to hide that you're Jewish.

SAM. I know. I just need to make sure that I'm not trying to hide it from myself.