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Dramatic Publishing

REVIVING OPHELIA

A Play

by

CHERIE BENNETT

Adapted from

Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls
(Putnam, 1994) by Dr. Mary Pipher

(Youth version)

Commissioned by Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park,
Edward Stern, Artistic Director; Buzz Ward, Executive Di-
rector; winner of the 2006 Macy's New Play Prize for
Young Audiences.



Dramatic Publishing

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Based upon the book

Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls

by DR. MARY PIPHER

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(REVIVING OPHELIA)

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Buzz Ward, Executive Director”

* * * *

Reviving Ophelia was commissioned by the
Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park through the generous
support of the Macy’s Fund of the Federated
Department Stores Foundation.”

The Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park

Edward Stern, Producing Artistic Director
Buzz Ward, Executive Director

produced the world premiere of REVIVING OPHELIA
March 27 to April 21, 2006 with the following artists of
the Skilken Brown Touring Company:

CAST

Lia/Jill's Mom ALLISON MCLEMORE
Dawn/Zack's Mom ANN MARIE SIEGWARTH
Allie COURTNEY BELL
Jill/Allie's Mom. MARCELLA PORTUGAL
Lisa's Mom/Principals NIKKI FERRY
Alex JARRED KJACK
Zack/Raymond Ortiz MIKE ANTHONY

PRODUCTION STAFF AND CREW

Director MOSES GOLDBERG
Set Designer KERRIE LOVERCHECK
Costume Designer MYRON ELLIOT
Fight Director REGINA CERIMELE-MECHLEY
Assistant Fight Director JOSHUA BLASE PIKAR
Sound Designer ERIN WATERS
Stage Manager. SHELBY TAYLOR LOVE
Director of Education BERT GOLDSTEIN
Education Associate. ANITA TROTTA
Education Intern JOCARDO EDWARD RALSTON
Study Guide Preparation PATRICIA TARPEY

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTE

This version of *Reviving Ophelia* was commissioned by the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park for its Skilken-Brown touring company for performances at high schools and middle schools. The running time is approximately sixty minutes. It is most appropriate for performances to middle and/or high school audiences. A full-length version of *Reviving Ophelia* suitable for adult theaters and audiences, which explores more deeply the mother-daughter dynamics of these girls' lives, is also available from Dramatic Publishing. Contact the publisher for more information.

A FEW THOUGHTS FROM MARY PIPHER, PH.D.

I am honored to be involved in this wonderful production of *Reviving Ophelia*. I am delighted by Cherie Bennett's adaptation and pleased that its premiere is with the Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park. I offer my heartfelt thanks to all the people with energy, vision and compassion who made this event possible. My book was published in 1994 and has been translated into more than 25 languages. However, this is the first time it has been presented as a play. I truly hope audience members enjoy this performance and that it inspires strong feelings, new thoughts and good conversations.

Since I wrote *Reviving Ophelia*, the world has changed and it has stayed the same. In 1994, almost no teenagers had personal computers in their home, let alone their bedrooms, and none had cell phones, PlayStations or iPods. I wrote my book before Columbine, 9/11 and instant messaging. Yet many of the issues I was concerned about are relevant today. We still live in a girl-poisoning culture where girls are pressured to shop, to consume junk, to grow up too fast and to be thin, sexy and decorative. And girls today struggle even more with depression, eating dis-

orders and problems with harassment, alcohol and drugs. They must fight to maintain positive identities in a culture that consistently sends them messages that who they are inside isn't important.

Since I was a young teen in the 1950s, the culture has changed a great deal, but the needs of girls have stayed the same—to work, play, relax and learn, to be loved and nurtured by friends and family, to develop their skills and talents, and to be appreciated for their character structures and kindness as they grow into authentic whole people who can offer their many gifts to the world.

I hope this play is a step towards meeting the needs of girls, and also of boys who have many of the same needs and issues. I hope it encourages teens, teachers and parents to work together to build a world where all children can flourish like young trees.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Mary Pipher's book exploded onto the scene in 1994, raising serious questions about the way our intense, media-driven culture warps the expectations and emerging personalities of adolescent and pre-adolescent girls in American society. Parents, educators, and others leaped forward to address the issue, but in the decade since, the situation only seems to have gotten worse. Most parents have a powerful wish for their daughters to stay healthy, maintain a positive attitude, and reach their fullest potential as human beings—but we also want them to get into the right college, move easily in a circle of friends, and not be overweight. MTV bombards them with images of mostly unattainable physical perfection; and easy access to the cyber-world offers them multiple opportunities for self-expressions—the vast number of which seem to be cries for help. Now Cherie Bennett has translated Pipher's increasingly relevant message into the dramatic form. A play is not a lecture, or a psychology text. A

play has to be about particular individuals with particular problems. But both the book and the play are informed with the same imperative. Both urge society to enable *girls to find themselves* amongst all the dictates and distractions of our cultural environment; i.e., to value their true selves, in spite of media messages that pretend to tell them what to value: thinness, sexuality, money, the right clothes, the right friends, etc. In this play Lia, Dawn, Jill and Allie represent—in theatrical shorthand—all of our daughters. Perhaps it's not enough to love our daughters? Perhaps we also have to show them the stars.

Moses Goldberg

REVIVING OPHELIA

CAST: with doubling: cast of 7 (2 men, 5 women), without doubling: cast of 16 (3 men, 7 women, 6 either gender)

CAST LIST

The actresses play these characters at age 6, 13, 18 and 21.

LIA smart, a talented writer. Doubles as Jill's mom
DAWN pretty, rich. Doubles as Zack's mom
ALLIE conservative, wants to be liked, thoughtful
JILL Native American, full-figured. Doubles as Allie's
mom

FEMALE SWING: All school principals, the Taekwondo teacher, Lia's mom, party guest, other roles as needed.

The actors cast play these characters at age 6, 13 and 18.

ALEX sensitive, a talented actor
ZACK very good looking. Doubles as Raymond Ortiz

TIME: 1994 - 2006.

PLACE: A suburb of a major American city.

NOTE: The play can be updated as needed by changing the dates and the newspaper headlines that the school principals announce and using rock music current to that time.

If updating the script, please research and use real issues/headlines of the appropriate year. Rock music is integral to this script. All music is suggested; rights must be obtained.

REVIVING OPHELIA

SCENE: *Overblown collages of teen personal secrets [see postsecret.blogspot.com for examples] frame the stage. Racks stage right and left, visible to the audience, hold simple props and costumes. Otherwise, the set can be bare, with black boxes/moveable pieces used to quickly create each new set. This can be done by the company during monologues as indicated. Scenes and space flow freely, one into another. Current rock music plays during half-hour.*

AT RISE: *Green Day's "The Time of Your Life"—or something similar—plays loudly, then fades as LIA, ALLIE, JILL and DAWN enter and cross DC to address the audience. During all direct audience address, the girls are age 21.*

LIA age 21. This is the story of four girls.

(A beat, as the girls look at each other, then back at the audience.)

FOUR GIRLS age 21. Us.

DAWN age 21. Growing up in the shadow of—

ALLIE age 21. Air-brushed—

JILL age 21. Super-model—

ALL age 21. Perfection.

LIA age 21. Wondering if we're—

ALLIE age 21. Sweet enough—

LIA age 21. Smart enough—

DAWN age 21. Sexy enough—

JILL age 21. Skinny enough—

ALL age 21. —to love.

ALLIE age 21. When we get away from the glare of the
TV—

LIA age 21. And the movie screen—

DAWN age 21. And the white, hot lights of the perfect
magazine covers—

LIA age 21. We look up—

ALLIE age 21. Searching—

ALL FOUR age 21. For something more...

*(ALL FOUR GIRLS look out to the back of the theater,
as if searching for something vital to them. A long beat.*

SOUND: A school bell rings.

*MUSIC: A children's chorus singing "It's a Small World
After All"—or something similar.*

*ALEX and ZACK enter. They and the four girls become
FIRST-GRADERS on the first day of school. Each adds
a prop/costume piece: ALLIE—swim goggles, DAWN—a
tutu, JILL—a white petticoat, LIA—the book Green Eggs
and Ham, ALEX—a Yu Gi Oh card deck, ZACK—an
ugly knit cap with ZL initials woven into it.*

*SWING ACTRESS crosses to a microphone DL becom-
ing PRINCIPAL #1.*

PRINCIPAL and STUDENTS stand, hands over hearts, facing an imaginary American flag at the back of the theater.)

PRINCIPAL #1 (*her first year as principal, way too perky into a mike, as if over a school P.A. system*). Good morning students of John F. Kennedy Elementary School! And an extra special Kennedy welcome to our brand-new first-graders! Today is September 1, 1995. Today's headline: "President Clinton Loses Budget Vote in Congress"! Today's lunch will be turkey surprise, peanut butter and jelly or a non-peanut vegan alternative! Have a super-duper day!

(The PRINCIPAL and the FIRST-GRADERS recite the Pledge of Allegiance. The kids don't know it very well.)

ALL KIDS & PRINCIPAL #1. I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

(PRINCIPAL #1 exits. All kids sit except ALLIE, who stands facing her classmates.)

ALLIE age 6 (*very eager*). My name is Allie Winton and I'm six and I have four sisters who are bigger than me and a littler brother who is getting potty trained soon, I hope. My dad is a minister and my mom doesn't do anything. When I grow up, I'm gonna swim in the Olympics and be a astro-nut and President of the United States.

(ALLIE sits, triumphant. ZACK rises and faces them.)

ZACK age 6. Zack. My dad is a—

ALLIE age 6 *(her hand flies into the air, as if desperate to be called on)*. Oh, oh, oh! *(Jumping to her feet)*. You're supposed to say your last name, too. *(She sits, very pleased with herself.)*

ZACK age 6. Zackary Alan Lansit. My dad owns a bunch of restaurants and my mom is a weaver, like she made this hat and stuff. And I have a dumb sister.

(He sits quickly. DAWN rises. She wears a tutu. She does a pirouette and is very aware of how cute she is.)

DAWN age 6. I'm Dawnie Lynne Parker and I'm in pageants and this year I won Little Miss Sunshine and my talent was ballet. I'm gonna be famous. I live in the big house at the top of Lakeview Road, which is called that because we live on a lake. I have a swimming pool and a trampoline and a pony and her name is Sugar because she's all white except for her nose.

(She sits. The others applaud, dazzled. JILL rises. She wears a white petticoat on her head, runs her hands along it.)

JILL age 6. I'm Malibu Barbie. This is my beautiful, long blond hair. I have a lot of friends, and a pink convertible and a boyfriend named Ken.

ALLIE age 6 *(jumps to her feet)*. Malibu Barbie is only your pretend name. *(Proud of herself, ALLIE sits again.)*

JILL age 6 (*embarrassed*). My name is Jill. Jill Bay. I'm six. (*A long beat. She can't think of anything else to say.*)

ALLIE age 6 (*a loud stage whisper*). Say what your parents do!

JILL age 6. My mommy and daddy work at Kroger where you get food. (*A long pause.*) I got adopted when I was a baby from an Indian reservation. But I'm not an Indian anymore, I'm just like Mommy and Daddy.

(*Self-conscious, she sits. LIA jumps up and faces the group, very self-confident, holding Green Eggs and Ham.*)

LIA age 6. My name is Ophelia Rachel Miriam Levitsky-Lerman. My daddy is a lawyer and my mom is a writer and I'm gonna be a writer too when I grow up. My mom taught me to read when I was four because I'm a-celler-ated. Lookit. (*She opens Green Eggs and Ham.*) Do you like green eggs and ham? Yes, I like them, Sam I am.

ZACK age 6. Hey, if you ate green eggs you'd barf green barf.

ALEX age 6. And poop green poop! (*The two boys fall over laughing.*)

LIA age 6. That is very immature.

(*LIA sits with dignity. ALEX rises and faces the group, Yu Gi Oh deck in hand.*)

ALEX age 6. I'm Alex Perry.

LIA age 6 (*turns to the other kids*). He lives next door to me but I don't like him.

ALEX age 6. I don't like you, either, doody-face.

LIA age 6. That is very, *very* immature!

ALEX age 6. My dad builds stuff and my mom is a professor. She teaches Shakespeare. He writes stuff in a language that sounds kind of like English. I'm gonna be a Yu Gi Oh master. Always remember that you may *not* summon Toon Summon Skull unless Toon World is already on the field. Or else, it's war! (*Brandishing imaginary sword.*) Die, foolish mortals!

(Kids jump up and start a game of tag, some of the girls shriek with glee. ALEX and LIA slap/shove each other.)

LIA age 6. Stupid.

ALEX age 6. Stupid.

LIA age 6. Stupid.

ALEX age 6. Stupid.

ZACK age 6 (*tags ALLIE*). Allie's "it"!

(She's dazzled by his great looks and is instantly dumb-stuck by love.)

ALLIE age 6. I like your hat.

(A long beat. He can't think of anything to say.)

ZACK age 6. 'kay. (*Kids run again. ZACK tags JILL.*) Jill is "it"!

(ZACK circles JILL, hopping, patting his mouth, making “Indian” noises.)

ZACK age 6 (*innocently*). That’s what Injuns do, right?

JILL age 6. I dunno.

ALLIE age 6 (*innocently*). Do you speak Injun?

JILL age 6. No.

LIA age 6 (*an observation*). You have brown skin.

JILL age 6. No I don’t.

DAWN age 6. Let’s play cowboys and Indians and you guys will be the cowboys and Jill will be the Indian and I’ll be the Indian princess. ’kay, let’s do the injun dance.

(DAWN starts the same hopping, mouth-patting dance as ZACK. Everyone joins in, even JILL. Then she stops and crosses downstage to address the audience as her 21-year-old self.

The company sets up: Taekwondo class.)

JILL age 21. I look back on that now and I can’t believe I did that stupid dance with them. How do kids know on the very first day of school that you’re The One. The One who’s going to be out of it, year after year after year? By the time I was thirteen I had been The One for seven years. The One kids laugh at. Make fun of. That kid.

(PRINCIPAL #2 crosses DL.)

PRINCIPAL #2 (*harried, into a mike*). Good morning students of Taft Middle School. Today is November 21,

2001. Today's headline: "‘I Love You’ Virus Crashes Millions of Computers." Taekwondo will meet after school in the auditorium due to the sewage leak in the gym.

(JILL watches for a beat as ALLIE, LIA, ZACK, DAWN and ALEX, now age 13, don white doboks with blue or green belts and enter Taekwondo. ALLIE, ZACK and ALEX warm up with kicks, etc. LIA writes in a notebook. DAWN checks her reflection in the mirrored wall. Then JILL addresses the audience again.)

JILL age 21. Dawn, Allie, Lia and I weren't exactly friends. But when we were eight, our parents put us all in weekly Taekwondo. We were the only girls, so we started hanging out. Well, *they* hung out, and sort of suffered my presence. In middle school, being in Taekwondo meant we got out of regular gym class. *(She dons a dobok.)* I liked that our *doboks* were big and baggy. In regular gym, we wore shorts and T-shirts, and the boys would rate the girls' bodies like it was an Olympic event. Barbie body? A ten. Big butt and small breasts? A one. I was a two. Anyway, I liked Taekwondo. I was good at it. And I liked feeling stronger; like maybe if I was tougher on the outside, I'd feel tougher on the inside. *(She looks over at the girls.)* Not that it worked, really. I'm not proud of this, but when I was thirteen, for some demented reason, I still wanted those girls to like me.

(JILL enters the scene becoming age 13, practicing Taekwondo moves. She's better than the others. LIA

scribbles in a notebook. DAWN yacks on her cell phone. ALLIE gazes adoringly at ZACK, who hangs out with ALEX.)

DAWN age 13 (*into phone, imperious*). Mom? Pick me up at six, I want to stop by Bloomies and get that pink Marc Jacobs sweater... No...because I don't *feel* like having Chinese... No... Because pizza has too many carbs... Just get me at six.

(DAWN hangs up, slides in next to LIA, and eyes ZACK. He's laughing with ALEX across the room.)

DAWN age 13 (*cont'd*). God, you'd think my stupid mother could get off her fat butt and cook once in a while. So who do you think Zack likes?

LIA age 13 (*still writing, doesn't look up*). Duh—Britney. That's who all guys like. (*A Britney Spears imitation.*)
“Hit me baby one more time!”

DAWN age 13. I meant, at our *school*.

LIA age 13. Whoever looks most like Britney.

DAWN age 13. Me then, good.

ALLIE age 13 (*shyly crosses to ZACK*). Zack, could you show me that spinning hook kick thingie?

ALEX age 13. You do it better than he does.

ALLIE age 13 (*a lie, embarrassed*). No, I don't.

ALEX age 13. You're all: “Oh Zack, help me!” just to get his attention.

ALLIE age 13 (*another lie; more embarrassed*). No, I'm not.

ZACK age 13. Hey, leave her alone. (*To ALLIE.*) Like this.

(ZACK shows ALLIE the move. DAWN checks herself out in the mirrored wall.)

DAWN age 13. Could these stupid outfits be any uglier? (Eyeing ZACK.) Allie is totally into Zack. It's so pathetic. We should ask Zack and Alex to meet us at the mall.

LIA age 13. Eww.

DAWN age 13. What? He's over at your house all the time.

LIA age 13. He's my friend-friend, not my boy-friend.

DAWN age 13. Zack says Alex goes to your house because ever since his mom moved out, he can't stand to be home. Oh, you know what else I heard? Alex's mom already got remarried. And she's pregnant. She never even comes to see Alex anymore, she just sends money. (She thinks a beat.) Why can't that happen to me?

LIA age 13 (looks over at ALEX). He's like some tragic hero.

DAWN age 13 (dubious). Alex?

LIA age 13. You don't really know him. He's smart. And deep.

DAWN age 13. You like him!

LIA age 13. Not like that. (Reads aloud from her notebook.) "She's a hip-hop ho' with the latest slang." (To DAWN.) What rhymes with "slang"?

DAWN age 13. Vera Wang?

LIA age 13. That's good. (Writing.)

"She's a hip-hop ho' with the latest slang

Spend all her chip on Vera Wang."

DAWN age 13. So tomorrow? You, me, Alex, Zack?