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A Second Chance

**Musical. Book, music and lyrics
by Ted Shen**

“Stands out from the pack of romantic comedy and drama with its painstaking attention to detail and cool, contemplative tone.”

—*www.dctheatrescene.com*

A Second Chance

Musical. Book, music and lyrics by Ted Shen. Cast: 1m., 1w.

Recent widower, Dan, and divorcee, Jenna, meet mid-life and mid-crisis. They develop an instant rapport while attending a dinner party, but Dan's grief precludes any follow-through. After running into each other a month later, Jenna invites Dan out on a “platonic date” where they experience an intense connection. After two months of enjoyable outings, Dan confesses that he feels guilty of betraying his late wife, Susan, and has nothing left to offer Jenna. Their relationship soon turns to romance, but Jenna realizes she may always be forced to compete with the now-idealized Susan. Dan proposes to build their dream home, but Jenna knows this will not rid her of her apprehensions about living with his past. But after a cathartic moment with Jenna and a photograph of Susan, Dan pledges to protect Jenna from her fears and urges her to join him in accepting a second chance at life and happiness. ***Bare stage with props. Approximate running time: 80 minutes. Code: S2C.***

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A Second Chance

Book, music and lyrics by
TED SHEN



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“Originally produced at Signature Theatre, Arlington, Virginia, November 2011
Eric Schaeffer, Artistic Director
Maggie Boland, Managing Director

Original New York Production by
The Public Theater
Oskar Eustis, Artistic Director, Patrick Willingham, Executive Director”

A Second Chance premiered at The Public Theater in New York City on March 30, 2014, with the following cast and crew:

Jenna	Diane Sutherland
Dan	Brian Sutherland
Director	Jonathan Butterell
Scenic Design.....	Robert Brill
Costume Design	Susan Hilferty
Lighting Design	Jen Schriever
Sound Design	Jonathan Deans
Projections Design	Rocco DiSanti
Orchestrations	Bruce Coughlin
Music Coordinator	Joseph Thalken
Music Director	Zak Sandler
Video Still Photographers	Eric Weeks, Stacy Renee Morrison
Production Stage Manager	Buzz Cohen
Stage Manager	Patrick David Egan
Music Copying.....	Emily Grishman
Music Preparation	Katherine Edmonds, Emily Grishman

A Second Chance

CHARACTERS

JENNA: 45-55 years old. Jenna is single, exceptionally warm and vivacious, and she is seeking an ideal relationship after a history of failed ones, including a recent divorce. She manages a research lab at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, the hospital, and loves art. (Soprano)

DAN: 45-55 years old. Dan is single, relatively reserved and thoughtful, and he has recently become widowed following a 25-year marriage. He is a banker and has a passion for architecture. (High baritone)

SCENES

ACT I:

Scene 1: A dinner party (October 2010)

Scene 2: The subway (one month later, November)

Scene 3: Her therapist's office (one month later, December)

Scene 4: His apartment (that night)

Scene 5: The Museum of Modern Art (one week later)

Scene 6: The West Village (one month later, January)

Scene 7: Central Park (one month later, February)

Scene 8: The High Bar (30 minutes later)

Scene 9: Central Park (later that night)

ACT II:

Scene 1: Her apartment (one month later, March)

Scene 2: In front of her apartment building (the next morning)

Scene 3: His apartment (two months later, May)

Scene 4: Her therapist's office (the next morning)

Scene 5: Central Park (that evening)

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A Second Chance

ACT I

SCENE 1: A DINNER PARTY

(October 2010. During cocktails at a dinner party hosted by a mutual friend, DAN and JENNA enter an empty room separately, lost in their private thoughts.)

(#1: “Dreams”)

DAN.

DREAMS,
DREAMS,

JENNA.

EVEN WHEN WE COME TO
DOUBT THEM,
COULD WE EVER LIVE WITH-
OUT THEM?

DAN.

DREAMS.

JENNA.

DREAMS,
DREAMS,

JENNA.

DREAMS.

DAN.

ALL THEY’LL EVER DO IS
HURT YOU,
FOR IN THE END THEY’LL
JUST DESERT YOU

DREAMS ...

DREAMS ...

(DAN moves to exit the room but is greeted by JENNA.)

JENNA. Oh, hi! I'm Jenna.

DAN. I'm Dan.

Nice party!

(DAN moves away from JENNA to continue his exit but is again addressed by her.)

JENNA. Do you know the people here?

DAN. Just our host, Ben.

JENNA. Oh, I've known Ben forever! Isn't he such a sweetheart!

I WAS FILLING HIM IN
ON A CRAZY BLIND DATE:
A REALLY NICE GUY,
BUT WE COULDN'T RELATE.

Oh, you don't want to hear about that!

DAN.

OH, NO, I'D LOVE TO HEAR MORE!
THOUGH I DON'T MEAN TO PRY ...

JENNA.

NO PROBLEM! ... BUT
I'D HATE TO BE A BORE!

DAN.

I PROMISE YOU WON'T!

JENNA.

SO, HE'S TEN MINUTES LATE
IN HIS STRETCH LIMOUSINE,
BUT I DON'T MIND THE WAIT
'CAUSE I'VE BEEN SET UP BY JEAN
O'CONNELL.

DAN (*intrigued*). Jean O'Connell?! *She's* the one who twisted my arm to come here tonight!

JENNA. Oh!

WHEN WE GET TO THE REST'RANT,
HIS FAM'LY'S AT THE TABLE!

(*The following spoken line is optional.*) His grown-up son and daughter, his mother, and his Aunt Betty!

(*Beat.*)

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO,
BUT I MANAGE TO BE ABLE
TO SAY, "I'M OUTTA HERE!"

DAN. Sounds like a catch!

JENNA. Oh, yeah, right, but not *exactly* what I'm looking for!

DAN. Well, just what *are* you looking for?

JENNA. You want me to go on?

DAN. Uh-huh.

JENNA. OK ... get ready!

I'M LOOKING FOR SOMEONE
TO FALL MADLY IN LOVE WITH:
SOMEONE WHO'LL FALL JUST AS
MADLY IN LOVE WITH ME.
I DON'T WANT US TO TURN INTO ONE OF THOSE
COUPLES
WHO JUST SIT ON THEIR COUCH AFTER DINNER
EVERY NIGHT
WATCHING SITCOMS ON THEIR CABLE TV.
SO CONTENTED, UNAWARE OF THE SADNESS OF
THEIR PLIGHT,
NOT ALLOWING THEIR LIVES TO BE AS FULL AS
THEY CAN BE.
I WANT US TO BE FREE ... TO DO ANYTHING!
WE'LL SOAR AND EXPLORE AND GIVE CHASE,
DISCOV'RING THINGS TO ASTOUND US.

WE'LL TRY TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE,
AND INSPIRE THOSE AROUND US.
THAT'S MY VISION ...

(Laughing apologetically.)

Oh! That sounded more like a manifesto!

Anyway, what about you? What is it *you're* looking for?

DAN. No, let's stick with you.

JENNA. It's your turn. Fair is fair!

DAN.

WHAT AM I LOOKING FOR?
MY LATE WIFE WOULD HAVE KNOWN.

JENNA. I'm so sorry!

DAN.

I JUST ACCEPT THE WAY THINGS ARE,
I DON'T LOOK AHEAD TOO FAR.
FOR NOW, I'M MANAGING ON MY OWN.

I'VE ALREADY LIVED MY DREAMS:
THOSE TWENTY-FIVE YEARS THAT WE SHARED.
BUT LET'S NOT DWELL UPON THE PAST.
IT ALL GOES BY SO FAST.
SO TELL ME HOW YOU'LL FIND THIS "SOMEONE" OF
YOURS.

JENNA. You really want to hear more?

DAN. Yes, I really do!

JENNA. This is too embarrassing! So ... capricious!

DAN. I could use a little "capriciousness" right now. Please!

JENNA *(with exaggerated drama)*. Well, then,
I'LL JUST BELIEVE IN MYSELF,
WEAR MY MOST CONFIDENT FACE,
MY MOST DAZZLING SMILE,

MY MOST RADIANT GLOW
THAT CAN FILL ANY SPACE AND BEGUIL
WITH THE EXTRAORDINARY ESSENCE
OF THE EFFERVESCENT, ENERGIZING, EMPATHETIC ...
EXTRAVAGANTLY ELEGANT, EXQUISITELY ...
(Runs out of "E" words.)

DAN.
ENTRANCING!
NOT TO MENTION EFFUSIVE,

JENNA.
EXUBERANT,

DAN.
ELECTRIFYING!

JENNA (*triumphantly*).
EXOTHERMIC!

DAN (*astonished*).
EXOTHERMIC?!

JENNA.
YET INEXHAUSTIBLE
ME!

There you have it! (*Laughing at herself*.)

DAN (*smiling*). Excellent!

JENNA (*gesturing to DAN's smile*).
I'M HAPPY TO SEE THAT SMILE.
THE FUTURE'S NOT DARK AS IT SEEMS.
I'M SO SORRY FOR YOUR LOSS,
I CAN'T IMAGINE HOW IT HURTS,
BUT WE'RE ENTITLED TO HAVE DREAMS.

THAT'S WHY I'M NOW ON A DIFF'RENT COURSE
AWAY FROM THAT BLESSED DIVORCE.

Messy, but blessed!

I'LL OPEN UP MY HEART AGAIN,
YET ACT A LITTLE SMARTER WHEN
I MAKE MY BRAND-NEW START, AND THEN
I'LL FALL IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE,
YES, I'LL FALL IN LOVE WITH SOMEONE
WHO IS MADLY, OH SO MADLY
IN LOVE WITH ME!

DAN. Lucky guy!

(They exchange warm smiles and exit in opposite directions.)

SCENE 2: THE SUBWAY

(One month later, November. On her way home from work, JENNA enters a downtown Lexington Avenue subway that DAN has just boarded.)

SUBWAY CONDUCTOR *(recorded voice announcement)*.
Stand clear of the closing doors, please!

(#2: “Not at All”)

(JENNA spots DAN standing there with his back to her.)

JENNA *(to herself)*. Oh, my God!

IT'S THE GUY FROM BEN'S PARTY WHO I THOUGHT
WAS SO GREAT!
I ACTUALLY HOPED HE MIGHT ASK FOR A DATE.
BUT WHEN HE SAID THAT HE'D BEEN WIDOWED
ONLY THIS YEAR,
MY ALARMS WENT OFF AND WARNED ME, “SISTER,
STAY CLEAR!”

(DAN notices JENNA.)

DAN *(to himself)*.

SHE'S THE ONE WHO INTRIGUED ME THAT EVENING AT BEN'S.

WE HIT IT OFF SO WELL, WE IGNORED HIS OTHER FRIENDS!

SHE WAS DAZZLING, A BIT "KOOKY" WITH SUCH A WARM HEART,

BUT MY ALARMS WENT OFF AND WARNED, "IT'S TOO SOON TO START!"

JENNA.

IT'S TOO BAD, HIS MANNER'S SO DISARMING.

DAN.

SO SAD, HER GLOW IS REALLY CHARMING.

DAN & JENNA.

I'M REAL GLAD THERE'S NOTHING HERE TO BE ALARMING

SINCE I REALLY HAVE NO INT'REST AT ALL ...

(DAN walks toward JENNA to say hello.)

JENNA *(excited and alarmed)*.

HE'S COMING OVER!

DAN & JENNA.

NOT AT ALL!

DAN. Hi, Jenna! Fancy meeting you here!

JENNA. So nice to see you, Dan! I'm just on my way home from work.

DAN. Me, too. So, how's that search going for "Mr. Right"?

JENNA. Mmm, it's "going." But how are *you* doing? You're getting out more these days, I hope.

DAN. A friend took me to see some dance last month.

JENNA. I *love* the dance, especially ballet!

DAN. I read that the Mariinsky is coming next season.

Would you like to go with me?

JENNA. I still think of them as "the Kirov"—old-fashioned me!—But, yes, I'd love to!

DAN (*taking out his wallet*). Let me find something for you to write your number on ...

(DAN fumbles in his wallet for something to write on while JENNA gets out her pen. Just then, the subway comes to an abrupt, screeching stop and the doors open.)

JENNA. Grand Central! Sorry! I've gotta get off here!

DAN. Wait! Just tell me your number, and I'll memorize it.

JENNA (*exiting the train*).

212-962-6293.

Looking forward to the ballet!

DAN (*waving*).

I'LL CALL.

(The subway doors close with JENNA standing on the platform and DAN remaining on the train, which begins pulling out of the station. They continue to look in each other's direction.)

DAN & JENNA.

THE TIMING IS UNFORTUNATE; IT'S SO PREMATURE.
OPPORTUNITY NEVER KNOCKS ON CUE.

THERE'S NO WAY TO TAKE A LEAP WHEN YOU'RE

REALLY QUITE SURE
THAT THE JOURNEY'S NOT THE RIGHT ONE FOR
YOU!

(DAN and JENNA are now out of sight of each other.)

DAN & JENNA *(cont'd)*.
IT'S TOO BAD!

DAN.
I'M FEELING SO UNSTEADY.

DAN & JENNA.
SO SAD!

JENNA.
HE REALLY ISN'T READY.

DAN & JENNA.
AND HAVE I GONE TOTALLY MAD

DAN.
IN ASKING FOR HER NUMBER

JENNA.
IN GIVING HIM MY NUMBER

DAN & JENNA.
WHEN THIS REALLY HAS NO FUTURE AT ALL?
THOUGH I THINK I'D LIKE TO SEE HER/HIM
AGAIN.
I WOULDN'T MIND THAT AT ALL,
NOT AT ALL, NOT AT ALL,
I WOULDN'T MIND AT ALL!

SCENE 3: HER THERAPIST'S OFFICE

(One month later, December. Seated in her therapist's office, JENNA reflects on her second encounter with DAN.)

(#3: "Perfectly Wrong")

JENNA. O-kay ...

I'VE BEEN THINKING OF DAN FOR THESE PAST FEW WEEKS

SINCE I SAW HIM ON MY WAY HOME FROM WORK.

I LIKE THE WAY THAT HE LISTENS AND THE WAY HE SPEAKS.

(Ironically playful.)

ALTHOUGH HE'S A BANKER, HE ISN'T A "JERK."

HE'S ASKED ME TO SEE THE MARIINSKY BALLET, BUT HERE'S A LITTLE COMPLICATION:

THEIR SEASON IS STILL MORE THAN SIX MONTHS AWAY,

SO DID HE MEAN THAT AS A REAL INVITATION?

Don't answer that!

I ACTUALLY GAVE HIM MY NUMBER; I'M KIND OF APPALLED.

NOW TWENTY-NINE DAYS LATER, HE STILL HASN'T CALLED!

SHOULD I CALL HIM FIRST? GET HIS NUMBER FROM BEN?

NO, THAT IDEA IS THE WORST! I'D COME UP SHORT AGAIN

BECAUSE ...

IT'S PERFECTLY WRONG,

WELL, WRONG FOR ME

WHEN I'M SUPPOSED TO BE SEARCHING FOR MY PERFECT MISTER RIGHT.

SO,

HE'S PERFECTLY WRONG,
TOO SAD TO BE
THE VERY ONE TO FILL MY DAYS WITH LAUGHTER
AND LIGHT.

YES,

I KNOW THAT YOU'VE TOLD ME A THOUSAND TIMES
NOT TO MAKE THIS A FAIRY-TALE QUEST.
SINCE ALL THE MEN IN MY LIFE HAVE FAILED ME:

(Dismissively.)

MY FATHER, MY HUSBAND AND THE REST.
TO BE ABANDONED OR BETRAYED,
WHAT DIFF'RENCE DOES IT MAKE
WHEN YOU CAN'T EVER TRUST THEM AGAIN?
BUT I'LL FIND THAT "SOMEONE"
WHO CAN GIVE AND NOT JUST TAKE!
IT'S SIMPLY A MATTER OF WHEN!
MEN!

(Music cue.)

JENNA *(cont'd)*. So, Dan ...

HE COULD BE PERFECTLY RIGHT? RIGHT?
WELL, RIGHT ENOUGH IF HE
COULD BE LIFTED FROM HIS LONELY DESPAIR?
SO WHAT AM I DOING HERE WITH YET ANOTHER
"RESCUE CASE"?
OF COURSE,
THIS ONE IS DIFF'RENT, I FEEL!
THOUGH I KNOW HE'S REALLY STUCK IN AN AW-
FUL PLACE,
COULD I MAYBE FIND SOME WAY TO HELP HIM
HEAL?
THAT'S SO NAÏVE!
BUT HOW WOULD I BEGIN? I COULDN'T AFFORD TO
WAIT
FOR THAT BALLET SEASON TO START.

I KNOW! ... I'D JUST ASK HIM OUT ON A PURE PLA-
TONIC DATE
TO MUSEUMS WHERE WE'D SIMPLY VIEW ART.
THEN WE'D PROGRESS TO THE MOVIES, EXPLORE
EVERY PARK,
AND WANDER AIMLESSLY FOR MILES.
THEN ON TO "POET'S WALK" AND PICNICS IN THE
DARK,
WHERE I'D SING HIM LULLABIES TILL HE SMILES.
AND THAT'S WHEN I'D KNOW FOR SURE
THAT I'D MADE MY TRUE MARK,
BUT EVEN THEN WOULD HE BE
PERFECT ENOUGH?

(Shrugs.)

... DON'T ASK ME.

So, I'm gonna ask him out. Right?