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Dramatic Publishing

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Richard Dresser's

Wonderful World

A man and a woman are shown in a warm, intimate embrace. The man, in the background, is looking upwards with a joyful expression. The woman, in the foreground, is laughing heartily, her head tilted back. They are both wearing light-colored, textured cardigans. The overall mood is one of happiness and connection. The background is a soft, warm glow.

Wonderful World

Comedy. By Richard Dresser.

Cast: 2m., 3w. A close-knit New

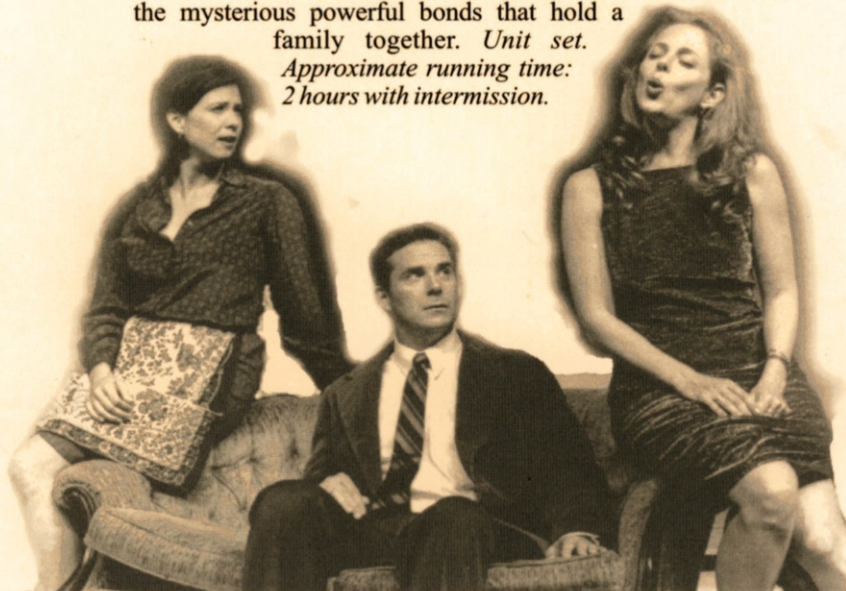
England family is shaken to its core when a minor misunderstanding spirals out of control.

Max and Barry, two brothers, find themselves at odds when Barry's wife, Patty, misinterprets a dinner invitation, feels she was deliberately excluded and embarks on a full-scale scorched-earth policy of truth telling. Max's girlfriend, Jennifer, and mother, Lydia, are drawn into the fray as loyalties shift and relationships are ruthlessly examined. Patty's campaign to cut through accepted family truths forces them all to confront awkward sexual attraction, long-ago affairs, debilitating illness, and finally, a reconfigured family. *Wonderful World* probes the subterranean truths of an American family and ultimately affirms the mysterious powerful bonds that hold a

family together. *Unit set.*

Approximate running time:

2 hours with intermission.



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WONDERFUL WORLD

A Play in Two Acts
by
RICHARD DRESSER



Dramatic Publishing

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(WONDERFUL WORLD)

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WONDERFUL WORLD received its world premiere production at the Actors Theatre of Louisville's 25th Annual Humana Festival of New American Plays on March 16, 2001.

Jennifer..... BABO HARRISON
Max CHRIS HIETIKKO
Barry..... JIM SALTOUROS
Patty BARBARA GULAN
Lydia ROSEMARY PRINZ

Artistic Director MARC MASTERSON
Executive Director..... ALEXANDER SPEER
Scenic Design..... PAUL OWEN
Costume Design..... LINDA ROETHKE
Lighting Design..... AMY APPELYARD
Sound Design..... KURT KELLENBERGER
Properties Design..... MARK R. WALSTON
Stage Manager ALYSSA HOGGATT
Assistant Stage Manager ERIN WENZEL
Dramaturg TANYA PALMER
Casting STEPHANIE KLAPPER, C.S.A.
Casting in Chicago..... JANET LOUER

WONDERFUL WORLD received its West Coast premiere production at the Laguna Playhouse in Laguna Beach, California, August 2001.

Jennifer..... MAURA VINCENT
Max CAMERON WATSON
Barry..... ROBERT LEE JACOBS
Patty KATHE MAZUR
Lydia BARBARA TARBUCK

Executive Director..... RICHARD STEIN
Artistic Director..... ANDREW BARNICLE
Scenic and Costume Design DWIGHT RICHARD ODLE
Lighting Design..... DONNA RUZIKA
Sound Design..... DAVID EDWARDS
Production Stage Manager..... MARTI STONE
Production Manager..... JIM RYAN

WONDERFUL WORLD

A Play in Two Acts
For 2 Men and 3 Women

CHARACTERS

MAX a man

JENNIFER Max's girlfriend

BARRY Max's brother

PATTY Barry's wife

LYDIA Max and Barry's mother

PLACE: Various settings in New England.

TIME: The present.

Approximate running time: 2 hours (with intermission)

ACT I

SCENE 1

(Rolling thunder, then LIGHTS UP on Max and Jennifer's apartment. JENNIFER's fussing with flowers in a vase and hors d'oeuvres, critically examining the effect. MAX enters with an ice bucket.)

JENNIFER. What do you think?

MAX. About what?

JENNIFER. This.

MAX. Oh, fine. Perfect.

JENNIFER. I didn't know what kind of cheese they like. I got Stilton and Gouda and Brie and Camembert and Velveeta.

MAX. That should cover it. What's this, paté?

JENNIFER. We've never had them over before. Which is unforgivable.

MAX. For what this cost, you could have bought cocaine.

JENNIFER. Paté is less trouble. And olives. I don't personally care for olives, but others might. I hate company.

MAX. I know, sweetie.

JENNIFER. Where are they? They should be here right now. You told them six-thirty, right?

MAX. Around six-thirty. Seven. Whatever.

JENNIFER. So what you're saying is we don't have a clue when they might blow in. Thank you very much. This is a disaster already.

MAX. Jennifer.

JENNIFER. I think during cocktails I'll sit over here so I can see into the kitchen if there's smoke or a fire breaks out. Where do we keep the fire extinguisher?

(MAX makes himself a drink.)

MAX. Life would be so much easier if you drank.

JENNIFER. That's your department, Max. I'm going to change my clothes.

MAX. Again? Why would you do that?

JENNIFER. I don't know. This just feels generally inadequate to the occasion. *(She starts out.)*

MAX. Hey, stop.

JENNIFER. Why?

MAX. Because you're beautiful. Just exactly the way you are right now.

JENNIFER. Oh, Max. *(They hug.)* How do you put up with me?

MAX. It's quite a nasty chore, believe me. *(Kisses her.)* Tonight is really going to be okay.

JENNIFER. Maybe.

MAX. It might even be fun.

JENNIFER. Now you're dreaming. You always make me feel better.

MAX. I love that about myself.

JENNIFER. Did you ever think you'd be this happy?

MAX. Honestly? I never thought it was possible to be this happy.

JENNIFER. Me either.

MAX. It surprises me. How happy I am.

JENNIFER. Really? Why?

MAX. Well, you remember what a hard time I had. Before we agreed I'd ask you to marry me.

JENNIFER. I know, honey. I was worried. You were so deeply unhappy all the time.

MAX. I was miserable. I was lost. I was forlorn.

JENNIFER. I could tell. Poor sweetie.

MAX. To be honest, I wanted out. Big-time.

JENNIFER. You had cold feet. That's perfectly normal.

MAX. It's so crazy when I think of it now. And there was no one I could talk to.

JENNIFER. Why didn't you talk to me?

MAX. How could I? You were counting on me. You were the problem. And frankly, you were kind of fragile.

JENNIFER. Oh, I'm not all that fragile.

MAX. You mean I *could* have told you?

JENNIFER. I'm not saying I wouldn't have been utterly devastated. But you can tell me anything.

MAX (*takes a beat*). I'd have these incredibly violent dreams where I was chasing people through the woods shooting at them. But when I finally caught up with them I'd realize *they* were actually chasing *me*. So I'd have to run away through the woods as fast as I could, dodging their bullets. I'd wake up in a cold sweat—which I thought was blood—and there'd be this wonderful moment when I realized it was just a dream. And then I'd think about us and that's when the real nightmare began.

JENNIFER. I'm so glad we're past all that.

MAX. I know. But at the time, I didn't know what to do. It seemed like the only way out was if you died.

JENNIFER. Oh, Max. You're so silly sometimes.

MAX. I'm serious. I needed closure, something final. So I could move on. Do you remember last fall, that rainy night, running to catch a bus?

JENNIFER. No...

MAX. Viveca's party, the night the car got stolen.

JENNIFER. Oh, right.

MAX. And just before we got to the bus I stopped and you got mad—

JENNIFER. Irritated. Because we missed it—

MAX. I stopped because I thought I might push you under the bus.

JENNIFER. You were trying to kill me, Max?

MAX. It was just a brief, tiny stage I was going through. I felt trapped. But I'm finally secure enough to be honest about my fears. Now that we're both so happy.

JENNIFER. I'm not so happy right now.

MAX. Jennifer, that was *last fall*. So much has happened since then. I had to personally overcome the miserable example of marriage presented by my parents so that I could make a commitment to you.

JENNIFER. Were there any other times, Max?

MAX. No...

JENNIFER. That's not a very convincing no.

MAX. It's not like there were *all these times!* (*Beat.*) Do you remember that night someone stole my wallet at the circus?

JENNIFER. The hashish night?

MAX. You were taking a bath and I was making strudel and the power suddenly went off and I got a flashlight and went into the bathroom.

JENNIFER. I remember.

MAX. My flashlight caught you sitting in the bathtub just so shockingly beautiful and vulnerable. I think I loved you more in that moment than in the whole time we'd been together.

JENNIFER. You were going to toss the flashlight in the bathtub, weren't you?

MAX. What's important is that I love you, honey. I can't imagine my life without you.

JENNIFER. I have to leave, Max.

MAX. What, are you mad?

JENNIFER. I'm not mad. I'm leaving.

MAX. I thought we were happy.

JENNIFER. So did I. You tried to kill me. Repeatedly.

MAX. I just thought there was room for honesty in our relationship. Now that we're planning our lives together I want you to know everything.

JENNIFER. I didn't need to know that. I was very happy not knowing that. (*Gets her coat.*) I've got to walk walk walk. Get some air.

MAX. I don't like the idea of you all alone. There are lots of sickos out there.

JENNIFER. I'll take my chances.

MAX. You can't go.

JENNIFER. Why not?

MAX. You bought all this cheese.

JENNIFER. What do you want, Max?

MAX. We have people coming over.

JENNIFER. They're not people. They're family.

MAX. My family. I'll bet it would be different if it were your family.

JENNIFER. Yes, they wouldn't be coming.

MAX. You're the one who wanted to try the soft-shell crabs. I was never in favor of that.

JENNIFER. You actually want me to cook before I leave?

MAX. How long a walk are you planning?

JENNIFER. I honestly don't know if I'll ever come back.

MAX. I suppose you've never had even an innocent passing thought of wanting me dead?

JENNIFER. If I wanted to end things I'd just leave.

MAX. I couldn't face doing that to you. I know how much it would have hurt.

JENNIFER. Goodbye, Max.

(A moment between them. JENNIFER opens the door to leave. BARRY is standing there in a trench coat with an umbrella.)

JENNIFER *(continuing)*. Barry? How long have you been standing there?

(BARRY enters.)

MAX. Barry. Didn't even hear you knock.

BARRY. I didn't knock.

MAX. Why not? Were you waiting for us to just arbitrarily open the door?

BARRY. I was turning things over in my mind.

MAX. Where's Patricia?

BARRY. Who?

MAX. Patty?

BARRY. Who?

MAX. Your wife?

BARRY. Oh, were you expecting her, too?

JENNIFER. Of course! Where is she?

BARRY. If you wanted to see Patty then you should have invited her.

MAX. We did.

JENNIFER. That's why *you're* here. Right?

BARRY. Exactly. *I'm* here because *I* was invited.

MAX. I don't understand.

BARRY. You left an endless message on the machine with a lot of inane bullcrap directed at me. Then you said, "Could *you* come to dinner?"

MAX. Yes, could you and Patty come to dinner.

BARRY. That isn't what you said. In that whole senseless, moronic message you never once mentioned her name.

MAX. Yes I did. I asked you both.

BARRY (*gets out tape*). Do you want to listen to the tape, Max? Do you?

MAX. What, you brought evidence? Exhibit A?

BARRY. She just wanted to feel included. She wanted to feel that this wasn't the brothers getting together and she'd be some kind of a third wheel.

JENNIFER. If she's a third wheel then what kind of wheel am I?

MAX. You're a very big important wheel, Jennifer, but this isn't about you.

JENNIFER. You're right, it's about you. You left the message, Max. Call Patty and invite her over.

BARRY. I wouldn't advise that. Patty's sunk into a hideous funk. She's taken to her bed.

JENNIFER. We have to do something. It's just not a party without Patty. I'll call her.

BARRY. That would be a first.

JENNIFER. Excuse me?

BARRY. Do you know how many times you've called Patty? Does the number "zero" ring a bell?

JENNIFER. Well I'd like to call her now.

BARRY. Patty doesn't need your pity.

JENNIFER. It's not pity, it's polite.

BARRY. You don't love Patty.

JENNIFER. Of course I do. But as Max said, this isn't about me. It's about Patty. And Max.

BARRY. I'm talking to you, Jennifer. Do you love my Patty?

JENNIFER. Yes. I love your Patty. I find her a very interesting person.

BARRY. My Patty doesn't think you love her. My Patty wonders why the two of you have never once gotten together on your own. To go on a hike or have a picnic by a stream. Not once have you called my Patty.

JENNIFER. Your Patty's never called me. We live twelve blocks away. I'm the newcomer. Let's be frank, your Patty hasn't exactly gone out of her way to make me feel welcome.

BARRY. Boy oh boy. You're not talking like someone who loves my Patty.

JENNIFER. I do! But the truth is, your Patty can be very ...

BARRY. Very what?

MAX. Careful, hon. This could be a trap.

BARRY. Very *what*, Jennifer? Very *what*? Very *what*?

(JENNIFER starts to cry.)

BARRY (*continuing*). What did I do?

MAX. Jennifer's upset about something else. She doesn't mean what she said about Patty.

JENNIFER. Yes, I do! I mean every damn word of it! Your Patty is a very scary intimidating woman who expects the world to wait on her hand and foot!

MAX. Stop it, Jennifer.

JENNIFER. Aren't you the one who wants to tell the truth, Max? Why don't you tell Barry what *you* think of darling Patty?

BARRY. What do you think of darling Patty, Max?

MAX. I love Patty.

JENNIFER. Max says the biggest mistake you ever made was marrying Patty.

MAX. Please, this is so wrong.

BARRY. That isn't what you said in your wedding toast, Max. As I remember, you were pretty effusive.

MAX. Yes, and I stand behind my toast one hundred percent.

JENNIFER. Max thinks Patty has stolen the joy from your life. He thinks you've become nothing but a helpless twitching caretaker for a selfish woman.

BARRY. Interesting.

MAX. This is pure fabrication, Barry. Jennifer is trying to get back at me because...

BARRY. Because why?

MAX. We had a little bit of a tiff-type situation here.

JENNIFER. In Max's defense, he probably says these things because he's jealous of all the money you two have.

MAX. You've gotta just try to shut up, Jennifer.

JENNIFER. I know what you'll do if I don't shut up. You'll push me under a bus. (*She exits to the other room.*)

MAX (*calls after her*). Hey. That's personal.

BARRY. I spent hours trying to convince Patty she was imagining things. That she was welcome in your home.

But now I find out she's absolutely right.

MAX. No, Patty's not right. Patty *convinced* you she's right. Which she does all the time.

BARRY. Oh, so you think Patty controls me?

MAX. I'm not saying that.

BARRY. If Patty controlled me would I be here right now? Would I, Max?

MAX. Patty wanted you to stay home?

BARRY. Well, no, she actually wanted me to come here.

MAX. So you're doing exactly what Patty wanted.

BARRY. She wants the best for me. If she's controlling, it's good control.

(*JENNIFER comes in wearing her coat.*)

MAX. What are you doing, Jennifer?

JENNIFER. I told you, Max. I'm leaving.

MAX. You're really going to embarrass me like this in front of my brother?

JENNIFER. Yes, I am. (*Tosses her ring at MAX.*) Oh, and you can keep your engagement ring. (*She leaves.*)

BARRY. I didn't know you two were getting married.

MAX. Yes, we were going to tell you tonight. We're very excited.

BARRY. Well ... congratulations.

MAX. Thanks. (*Goes to bar.*) We should celebrate.

BARRY. Are you serious?

MAX. About drinking? Absolutely.

BARRY. I'm afraid a drink is not possible. Now that I've heard what you two think about my Patty, I can't in good conscience stay. Her honor has been violated.

(A clap of thunder.)

MAX *(looks out the window)*. It's really coming down out there.

BARRY. What the hell. A quick drink isn't going to kill anyone. *(Gets a drink and joins MAX at the window.)* Too bad Jennifer forgot her umbrella. Where do you think she's going in such a hurry?

MAX. Probably trying to get out of the rain, poor thing. Do you want anything? Perhaps a selection from The World of Cheese?

BARRY. Excellent. Bring it on. *(The brothers eat and drink.)* To tell you the truth, we were kind of dreading getting together tonight.

MAX. Us too.

BARRY. But it's actually working out fine.

(They eat and drink. BLACKOUT.)