

# Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

*Dramatic Publishing*

# Gardinia's 'n' Blum



A Comedy  
by  
Nicholas Patricca



The Dramatic Publishing Company

### \*\*\* NOTICE \*\*\*

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalogue and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether it is presented for charity or for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed anytime it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to: THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY, P. O. Box 109, Woodstock, Illinois 60098.

#### COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR HIS AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES.

This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work.

#### GARDINIA'S 'N' BLUM

is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved. On all programs this notice should appear: Produced by special arrangement with THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois.

©MCMLXXXIX by  
NICHOLAS A. PATRICCA  
Printed in the United States of America  
*All Rights Reserved*  
(GARDINIA'S 'N' BLUM)

**This comedy is dedicated to all those who work for the  
well-being of their communities.**

**FULL LENGTH WINNER**  
**THE GREAT CHICAGO PLAYWRIGHTS EXPOSITION**

The professional premiere performance of *Gardinia's 'n' Blum* was produced by Victory Gardens Theater and Body Politic Theatre, Chicago, Illinois, and was given on June 11–July 19, 1987, with the following cast:

TONY ..... Bernie Landis\*  
ROBERTA ..... Petrea Burchard\*  
HARRY ..... William J. Norris\*  
FRAZIER ..... Kenn E. Head  
ANGE ..... Joan Spatafora\*  
PEPPINU ..... Phil Locker\*

\*Member of Actors' Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers.

DIRECTOR ..... Dennis Zacek  
DRAMATURG ..... Sheldon Patinkin  
SCENIC DESIGNER ..... James Dardenne, USAA  
COSTUME DESIGNER . John Hancock Brooks, USAA  
LIGHTING DESIGNER ..... Robert Shook, USAA  
STAGE MANAGER ..... Galen G. Ramsey, AEA

\*This published version of *Gardinia's 'n' Blum* was developed in two workshops: The first at Victory Gardens Theater, Chicago, under the direction of Dennis Zacek; the second at Open Eye: New Staging Lab, New York City, under the direction of Amie Brockway.

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*Gardinia's 'n' Blum* is an "Italian Style" comedy based in a tradition which goes back to the village farces of the ancient Italic peoples. This style of comedy celebrates Lady Luck as the ultimate power that governs the world and takes perverse delight in her arbitrary actions and ironic sense of humor. Also, the "hero" of this type of comedy succeeds, not through virtue, but through the eccentricities and deficiencies of his character.

I first became aware of this type of comedy through the stories and attitudes of my maternal grandfather who was a recalcitrant, unmeltable ethnic, full of the peasant lore and sentiments of his native *Italia*. Later, in my formal education, I studied the works of the Classical Roman and Italian Renaissance comedians, recognizing in them the same sensibilities that I had found in my grandfather and the other "old timers" I knew during my childhood and early adolescence. Today, in my opinion, this "Italian Style" comedy is best seen in Italian cinema. In writing this play, however, I wanted to see if I could make a comedy of this type for the contemporary American stage.

Another awareness I received from my grandfather was about the fierce attachment Italian immigrants had to their land. Twice, once in Pittsburgh, my native hometown, and once in Chicago, my adopted hometown, I witnessed how people attached to home and neighborhood struggled both with those individuals who exploit every opportunity to make a buck and with the "impersonal" economic and social forces imposing physical and cultural

change in the name of “progress.” Twice I saw the people who had lived in these neighborhoods for three generations lose—their homes and their culture. In this play, because it’s a comedy and because it’s my comedy, the “greedy bastards” lose.

Nick Patricca

1989

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The first time I read *Gardinia's 'n' Blum*, I felt a sense of great comfort, warmth and familiarity. The characters that Nick Patricca has created in the form of Tony Gardinia and Harry Blum represent an era of life in Chicago which may be rapidly disappearing—an era of profound substance.

Chicago has frequently been described as comprised of ethnic neighborhoods established by hard-working blue collar families. This is the heritage of most of the artists working in the Chicago theater movement today.

Like the central character in Patricca's plays *The Ex-amen* and *The Fifth Sun*, Tony Gardinia is an ordinary man who has been put into extraordinary circumstances. Patricca writes plays which transcend the boundaries of realism while presenting questions which are of importance to the social, cultural and economic issues of our world. Tony Gardinia represents Patricca's grandfather. And for that matter, he also represents mine. He is our heritage.

Our forefathers may not have had the advantage of education or wealth, but they were men of enormous strength and character. There was nothing rarefied, or effete, or gentrified about them. They were without pretense and, like Tony Gardinia, they were working against the odds. They may not have won every battle, but they knew the value of a good fight particularly when it involved friendship. Here's to friendship.

Dennis Zacek  
Chicago-1989



# GARDINIA'S 'N' BLUM

A Full Length Comedy in Five Scenes  
For Four Men and Two Women

## PERSONAE

TONY GARDINIA ..... a man in his late sixties  
HARRY BLUM ..... a man in his late sixties  
FRAZIER ..... a black teen-ager  
ANGELINA SANTUCCI ... a woman in her early sixties  
ROBERTA DAVIES ..... a woman in her early thirties  
PEPPINU PIMPANELLA ..... a man in his fifties

SETTING: The Barbershop of Tony Gardinia

PLACE: The "Little Italy" section of Chicago,  
near Taylor and Racine

TIME: The Present

The action takes place over a two-week period

## SCÈNE

1. "The Intimation"
2. "The Complication"  
(Intervallo)
3. "The Aggravation"
4. "The Dissolution"
5. "The Superfluous Comment"

# GARDINIA'S 'N' BLUM

## SCENE ONE

### "The Intimation"

**SETTING:** *The barber shop of TONY GARDINIA. TONY has been cutting hair in this same shop since the early 1950's. The shop has two barber chairs, but only the one is used. Tony's partner, Gino, died about ten years ago and TONY has never found a suitable replacement. Everything in the shop is from the '50's. The walls are decorated with fight posters that date back to the time of Rocky Marciano. There are no posters about hair, except for a very old Vitalis advertisement. In addition to the fight posters, there are autographed photos of Frank Sinatra, Martha Ray, Louie Prima and the like. There is also a framed picture of Giuliano, the last great bandit of Sicily. This picture was taken from a 1948 LIFE magazine article on Giuliano just before he was killed. There is a black crepe funereal cloth draped over the upper portion of the frame of this picture. An old neon sign in the window says, GARDINIA'S.*

**AT RISE:** *It is early morning. TONY is sitting in his barber's chair reading NOI, the Chicago area Italian language newspaper. The chair faces the mirror, with the back to the door. An old phonograph is playing an old Louie Prima album: the song, "Angelina." A WOMAN enters, neat and professional in appearance. The song*

*"Angelina" concludes. Sounds of the needle on the blank section of the record are in the background.*

TONY *(remains in chair with back to the door and continues to read the paper. TONY can see the entire shop through the mirror).* We're closed.

ROBERTA. The sign says you're open.

TONY. The toilet doesn't work and I don't give change for the bus.

ROBERTA. Mr. Gardiana. *(Mispronounces the name.)*

TONY. Don't they teach you people in real estate school how to pronounce people's names?

ROBERTA. How do you pronounce your name?

TONY. I'm not interested at any price.

ROBERTA. I'm not a real estate agent.

TONY. I don't do women's hair. Go across the street.  
*Ciao, Bambino!*

ROBERTA. My name's Roberta Davies.

TONY. Nun parlo ingles'.

ROBERTA. I'm sure we could come to a mutually advantageous arrangement.

TONY *(swivels around to face her).* Lady, I know you gotta job to do. But don't insult my intelligence.

ROBERTA. I told you I'm not a real estate agent. *(Takes out a small leather ID wallet, offers to show it to him.)* Perhaps this'll help.

TONY. Any jerk with two bucks can buy a piece a paper to say any frig'n thing she wants. Nothing personal. *(Goes to turn off the phonograph which is not automatic.)* It's on the wall, just like the law says.

ROBERTA *(confused).* What's on the wall?

TONY. Mannaggia! *(Italian dialect expletive. Pronounced: ma-na-jia'.* TONY leads her to where the two barber

*licenses are displayed.*) City of Chicago: LIC. number 000127. State of Illinois: LIC number 001-...read it for yourself. (*ROBERTA starts to read the licenses, becomes interested in them.*) You should investigate those phoney balconies across the street. *Ciao, Bambino!* What kind of a name is that for a barber shop? You should arrest them for what they do to people's hair. Better yet, you should arrest the jerks that gave them a license to rob people.

ROBERTA. This license was issued to a (*Says the name very carefully, writes it down in her notebook.*) Mr. Gino T. Cerbone. (*Mispronounces Cerbone as: Serbone – bone as in bone.*)

TONY. I'm happy they teach you inspectors to read before they give you the badge.

ROBERTA. I thought you said your name was...

TONY (*sharply interrupting*). I didn't say not'ing. You did all the talk'n.

ROBERTA. Who's Mr. Gardinia? (*Mispronounces it again.*)

TONY. Gardinia! (*Pronounced: Gar-deen-ya, with the accent on the "ee."*) Should be Giardinia. (*Pronounced: Jar-deen-ya.*) Some idiot at Ellis Island left off the "i." He couldn't say it right either. Mr. Gardinia's (*Gar-deen-ya.*) dead.

ROBERTA. I'm sorry to hear that.

TONY. Why?

ROBERTA. Why?

TONY. Yeah, why?

ROBERTA. I assumed he was a friend of yours. I wanted to express my sympathy.

TONY. He wouldn't be interested.

ROBERTA. Where might I find his next of kin?

TONY. None of you' business. (*ROBERTA slowly surveys the premises which makes TONY nervous and unsure of exactly what to do.*) He was the best barber in this city, the whole city, the best!

ROBERTA. I'm sure he was.

TONY. Why?

ROBERTA. Why what?

TONY. Why you so sure he was the best?

ROBERTA. Because I take your word for it.

TONY. Nungia rompi y'i coglioni! (*Off-color Italian expression which means: don't try to make a fool of me.*)

You could show Tony a picture, any picture, and you got it! Just like the picture. (*Takes the cardboard list of prices, shows it to her.*) Four bucks! Go over there. You're lucky to get out for 75, a C note if you're not careful.

ROBERTA. Now I do have a reason to be sorry Mr. Gardinia's (*Pronounces it correctly as Gar-deen-ya.*) dead. I could always use a good four-dollar hair cut.

TONY. He didn't do women's hair.

ROBERTA. Like you.

TONY. Yeah, like me.

ROBERTA (*referring to the Giuliano picture*). Is this a picture of Mr. Gardinia?

TONY. No.

ROBERTA. Handsome man. A relative of yours?

TONY. None of you' business.

(*Enter HARRY.*)

ROBERTA. How long has Mr. Gardinia (*Pronounces it correctly: Gar-deen-ya.*) been deceased?

HARRY. Who's dead?

TONY. Mr. Giardinia. (*Pronounces the name in its original form to tip off HARRY: Jar-deen-ya.*) Remember?

HARRY. Who?

TONY. Mr. Giardinia.

HARRY. Oh, him. Mr. Giardinia (*Jar-deen-ya.*) God rest his soul.

ROBERTA. So you knew Mr. Giardinia (*Says Jar-deen-ya in imitation of TONY and HARRY.*)

HARRY. Knew him? Why we was the best of friends.

ROBERTA. When did he die?

HARRY (*looking at TONY*). When did he die? I'll never forget.

TONY. Ten years ago this August. Feast of the Assumption. Rained like hell.

HARRY. I'll never forget it. Caught one of those summer colds from getting wet at the cemetery. Summer colds are the worst. Put you in your grave. I think Tony here...

TONY (*interrupts HARRY, gives him a look that could kill, directs his words to ROBERTA*). Tony's my middle name. Gino T. Cerbone. (*Emphasizing the "T" and pronouncing the name: Cher-bo-ney with the accent on the "bo".*)

HARRY. ...I think he caught a bad cold too from that funeral.

ROBERTA. Thank you for your time, Mr. Cerbone. (*Says it correctly: Cher-bo-ney. Turns toward HARRY.*) And thank you, Mr...

HARRY. Blum. Harry Blum. (*HARRY pronounces his last name with a short "u" as in Plum.*) I run the pharmacy next door.

ROBERTA. Thank you, Mr. Blum. (*As ROBERTA exits she says to TONY.*) By the way, I couldn't help but

notice that your license expires in two weeks. Ciao, bambino!

TONY. Ciao mi culo! (*Italian for: ciao, my ass. Turns sharply to HARRY.*) You made the wrong mistake there.

HARRY. What did I do now?

TONY. What didn't you do is more like it. You' first mistake was coming in in the first place. (*The mailman deposits the mail through the mail slot in the door. TONY picks it up, throws it all in the wastebasket without looking at it. HARRY goes to the wastebasket, takes the mail out, peruses it, selects an important item, throws the rest back into the wastebasket. HARRY sits in the barber's chair ready for his morning shave.*)

HARRY. Tony, I come in here every morning, for Christ's sake!

TONY. What did I tell you about that?

HARRY. It's only an expression.

TONY. I don't say for Moses' sake.

HARRY. Nobody says for Moses' sake.

TONY. I don't give a frig what nobody says. The second mistake was saying "Tony" and the third mistake was telling her your name.

HARRY. What're you getting so upset about? My name is on my store window.

TONY. The trouble with you is you no understand how the world works. Your head is filled with narishkeit. (*TONY mispronounces this Yiddish word which means: foolishness.*)

HARRY. Like telling the truth.

TONY. A fish hook in the heart. They can yank it any time they want.

HARRY. She seemed nicer than most of those real estate sharpies.

TONY. Nice doesn't work with me.

HARRY. That last offer was pretty good, Tony. Maxi's cousin Abe can get us this condo right on the beach.

TONY. I'm not going to no frig'n Florida. And I already told you, no retirement talk.

HARRY. What's wrong with Florida?

TONY. I'm not dead, that's what's wrong with it.

HARRY. How many customers did you have yesterday?  
How many?

TONY. If you wanna sell your frig'n building, sell it.

HARRY. It's over, Tony, our time is passed. Walgreens, Osco, *Ciao, Bambino*: it's all computers, franchises, and phoney baloney. You know, this isn't an equal relationship.

TONY. What the frig's that supposed to mean?

HARRY. It means every time we get into an argument you got a razor at my throat.

TONY. Who's arguing. Besides, she's a cop.

HARRY. A cop?! Nice girl like that. She after Ange?

TONY. Nobody bothers Ange. Cuz pays everybody off. (*Cuz is short for cousin which is used by Italians to indicate a special relationship.*) She's after me. She's one of those jerks from the state. I can smell them a mile away.

HARRY. The barber's license. I told you they'd figure it out. You know, you look for trouble, you know that?

TONY. No frig'n stronzo's (*Italian slang: turd.*) tell'n me how to cut hair! Gino, he taught me. He was the best, now I'm the best.

HARRY. You can't go on using Gino's license forever.

TONY. Who said?



HARRY. It's a fact of life, Tony, like paying your real estate taxes. *(Hands TONY the tax notice from under the barber's cloth. This is the item HARRY retrieved from the wastebasket. TONY throws the notice into the wastebasket.)*

TONY. Mind you' own business.

HARRY. Tony, that's your third notice, you have to pay your taxes or you'll lose the building.

TONY. Everything's under control.

HARRY. Yeah, like with the barber's license. There are sharks out there just waiting to grab your building for back taxes.

TONY. Do I tell you how to run your frig'n life?

HARRY. Yes, as a matter of fact. I'll never get used to a grown man saying "frig'n"

TONY. No one's tak'n my land from me, no one.

HARRY. They raised everybody's assessments. Not just yours. The whole neighborhood's gone up. I told you my taxes went from 800 to 4000 dollars. All of a sudden, everybody wants to live on Taylor Street. And that's why we should sell and go to Florida.

TONY. It's just like they did with Giuliano.

HARRY. This is America, not Sicily.

TONY. Same difference. They raise his taxes so some greedy bastard could take his land. Greedy bastards is greedy bastards.

HARRY. I'm tired of your mishigas, *(Yiddish for: craziness.)* Tony. If it weren't for me, you'd have no gas, no lights. You'd be out on the street on your tochas. *(Yiddish for: rear end.)*

*(Enter FRAZIER. He is dressed in the current casual hip fashion. He walks in a cool nonchalant manner, sits in*

*one of the waiting chairs. He reads a magazine. HARRY does not see FRAZIER because of the towel on his face.)*

TONY. You take everything too serious, Harry. Bad for the heart. Don't you worry. The organization'll handle these things.

HARRY. Machine! Corrupt political machine!

TONY. Organization! No one's tell'n me how to do my job, and no one's gonna steal my land. And I'm gonna fix you' taxes too.

HARRY. You're a stubborn mule is what you are. Coccia tosta! (*HARRY pronounces this: Coacha dosht. Southern Italian idiom for: hardheaded.*)

TONY (*fondly*). You say it just like Gino. He couldn't speak Italian either.

HARRY. Gino was Italian, for Chris...I didn't say it.

TONY. He was Calabrese.

HARRY. Same difference.

TONY. Different difference.

HARRY. Gino was right. Your head would break a sledge hammer. (*TONY finishes shaving HARRY, unwraps the towel. HARRY sees FRAZIER, stares in utter amazement. To FRAZIER.*) You here for a haircut?

FRAZIER. Do I need one?

HARRY. That's not an easy question to answer. You kids today like to look ugly on purpose. (*To TONY.*) You gonna cut his hair?

TONY. He didn't ask me.

HARRY (*to FRAZIER*). Tony here, he doesn't know Afro from Punk from Mohawk.

TONY. I was giving Mohawks from before he was born.

HARRY (to FRAZIER). Maybe you should try across the street. He doesn't know anything about this frying and curling stuff.

TONY. Does he look like he can afford to pay those prices? You show me the picture, you get the cut. Perfect. Every time.

HARRY. You live around here?

FRAZIER. More or less.

HARRY. How much more and how much less?

FRAZIER. Depends on where you're standing.

HARRY. How about from where you're sitting.

FRAZIER. In that case more less than more. You ready, Mr. Gardinia?

TONY. If I'm not dead, I'm ready. (*FRAZIER gets off the chair, pretends to go sit in Tony's chair to get a haircut, then makes a perfect and real cool 180-degree turn and goes into Tony's living quarters.*)

HARRY (*confused and amazed*). Tony, that black kid went into your bedroom.

TONY. You always had good eyes, Harry. One of your better qualities.

HARRY. You don't like black people.

TONY. Who said?

HARRY. In '66 when Martin Luther King came to Chicago you sat up on your roof with a shotgun in your lap.

TONY. A lupara.

HARRY. Same difference.

TONY. Different difference. A lupara'd blow a hole in that frig'n wall so big you wouldn't have to go outside to go to you' store.