

By X Y

by

Mickey Bolmer

(two acts, 2, tragic comic bench play)

2 by 2 at the end of the world
partners
ex and other
gather again at the end of the world
What to say?
What to do?
What if one wants to be alone at the end
and the other
together?

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Semi-finalist for the O'Neill Summer Workshop

“an imaginative, original play...compelling and fascinating. One lucky audience that gets to see its premier” ---a repertory reviewer

“Mesmerizing. A distinct voice. In the tradition of the great absurdists.”
--- a Broadway Director

By X Y by Mickey Bolmer © July 2010

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Characters

X (Y's former partner; 45 to 59, played by a woman or a man)

Y (X's former partner; 45 to 59, played by a man or a woman)

Note: Six of the scenes in "By X Y" have characters other than X and Y. This makes it possible, should a company wish it, to play "By X Y" with 4 or 6 actors. 4 would be X, Y, and two actors to play all the other pairs, i.e. a two bench play. 6 would be X, Y, actors to play the famous pairs, and actors to play the mundane pairs, i.e. a three bench play.

Note: in some places one actor must cut off the other after one letter is spoken; this is marked with a *

Setting-Time

Central Park, NYC: bench and bush at the end of the world. The stage can be quite bare or quite realistically a park. In some ways, this is a vaudeville and so a cutout bush might be as interesting as a real bush. Props can appear from the bush.

Scene Breakdown

Prologue: Will Shakespeare sits, an empty man on a bench by the Thames; he has written his last play. Anne Shakespeare comes to bring him back to Stratford. He will not notice Anne even when she sits. She will hit him to get his attention.

Act 1

I-sc1: X is on a bench in Central Park waiting the end of the world. Glimmering light starts at the back of the house and comes to find X.

I-sc2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12: Y comes to find X and make X leave, then make X let Y stay.

I-sc3: This is a flashback (many years); X had left Y, and, a year later Y found X in the park. It is then that X named them, "X" and "Y."

I-sc5: Y as Arthur Miller; X as Marilyn Monroe. It's September, 2001. Arthur Miller and Inge Morath have flown in from Paris. Their daughter and grandson live blocks from where the World Trade Towers stood and were on the way to kindergarten as the attacks happened. Arthur, when all are settled in the Morath/Miller apartment, goes to gather himself in Central Park where he once met Marilyn Monroe.

I-sc7: short improvisations as if we are in X and Y's minds; as the words call up people, each word can become a scene, or not.

I-sc9: Y as Jon; X as David. Two boys meet for a run in the park.

I-sc11: Y as Mrs. Maison; X as Maqueda. Mrs. Maison, an old, blind woman has been wheeled into the park for some air by Maqueda, a high school girl who makes some extra money caring for Mrs. Maison.

Act 2

II-sc1, 5: X and Y continue after an intermission's length of time.

II-sc2: X as Agnes Meyer; Y as Eugene Meyer. It's June, 1952. In Detroit, Agnes Meyer has given a speech that connects the Catholic Church's push for parochial education, the weakening of the separation of church and state, and Senator McCarthy's hearings into a single, deeply serious threat to a free and democratic United States. The next day, *The Washington Post*, on the front page, repudiates Agnes and sends a Buffalo newspaper editor to board her train and get her to sign the repudiation and agree to be silent. Once in New York City, before going on to her home in Westchester, Agnes walks in Central Park. Her husband, Eugene, owner of *The Washington Post*, meets her.

II-sc3: Y as Edward Weston; X as Charis Wilson. It is dawn, New Year's Day, 2000. Charis Wilson, 85, on a book tour for her recently published Through Another Lens, has gone into Central Park to greet the millennium. Charis plays "Good night, Irene," on a recorder, enchanting Edward Weston who sits on the park bench as he did at dawn, April 1, 1946, his last living retrospective at MOMA having closed the day before. Edward and Charis agreed to divorce on January 1, 1946 and she filed the papers on December 13, 1946. He has Parkinson's and will die January 1, 1958.

II-sc4: Y as George; X as Joe. Lightning and thunder in the distance. George and Joe are two old bench friends. With the storm coming, George sits knowing that Joe is homeless and hoping to convince Joe to move in with him.

II-sc6: Will and Anne bless the stage and then X and Y continue scene 5.

Prologue

(Will is on the bench, an empty man taking some sun. He will not notice Ann even when she sits. She will hit him to get his attention.)

X as WILL
Fair

Y as ANN
Why fair? Do not speak to me of fair.

WILL
maid? Ann, are you here for the fair? I had to leave

ANN
Fair? I see only a swamp.

WILL
to be a park with a theatre, right over there. I

ANN
Yes, I had heard that the great William Shakespeare was wont to walk at odd hours here. Rumour was mistaken for I find only my kind Will. Yes, I know

WILL
had to leave,

ANN
you repeat yourself.

WILL
no, well, yes, for me and for you, for the children, now

ANN
Yes, you have ridden the slippery slope of favor dexterously

WILL
fortunately

ANN
indeed and so dangerous to family and friends but most of all to little children

WILL
Thank you, good Ann,

ANN

and now you are, as rumour has it, empty.

WILL

No spirit!

ANN

Will

WILL

Each new one kept the previous alive.

ANN

Ah, babies, but they do stop coming. Funny Will. Come. Will, we will

WILL

The end already!

ANN

a retreat to leave all awaiting the next great play

WILL

wright

ANN

in five acts by William Shakespeare. In the meantime we shall

WILL

a Burgomask dance

ANN

through the house give glimmering light

(exit à la Titania and Oberon, black out)

Act 1

(Glimmering light starting at the back of the house comes to find X who is on the bench, waiting.)

X

("One for my baby" (Harold Arlen/Johnny Mercer) MPL
Communications Inc. ASCAP)

The end. "It's quarter to three. There's no one in the place except you and me, so set'em up Joe, I got a little story you ought to know. We're drinking my friend to the end of a brief episode. Make it one for my baby and one more for the road."

(black out. Full sun, X, head back, eyes closed, a person drinking in some sun. Noise; it drives on Y. The sound stops just as Y calls X's name.)

Y

(shouting. This is a name with a long A, i.e. the letter's name.)

A*

X

Y

Y

A*

X

Y

Y

A*

X

Y

Y

Stop that!

X

Hello, Y.

(noise)

Y

Why! Why! Why!

X

are you here, Y?

Y

Why come out of here! Why I knew I'd find you here. Why it's not safe. Why, just yesterday, right here....Stop that! Look at me! Why we're supposed to be in a shelter! Come....come out of here. Why just this morning we all....instructions, you, we nearest airport there await transport to....come....come with me....we'll leave here, right now....we can make it....I know we can....now we go now must start right now....why right now....stop that....look at me....

(silence: frightening Y as much as noise.)

WHY!

X

I could get no further.

Y

WHY!

X

I don't know.

Y

WHY!

(X seating Y)

Oh...you, we...missed you so. Come, now's the time. We can make it! Come on, now! Don't just sit there!

X

Y, it's the end and so, it seems, a twilight pause.

Y

Why I'm so glad I found you. Come with me, now, please, we were told, A*

X

Be gone Y: if you want to die sitting on an airport bench, please feel free to go. If you want to die flying off in a airplane, please, feel free to go. If you want to die, Y, doing as you are told, say gathered together singing kumbyah in a death camp, please, feel free to go.

Y

A*

X

No, Y.

Y

Even