

THIS IS AN ONLINE SAMPLE
OF THE FIRST TEN PAGES OF

PEACE
By Callie Kimball

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PRODUCTION HISTORY

PEACE, inspired by Aristophanes' play of the same name, was commissioned by Washington Shakespeare Company. Previews started August 28, 2008. It opened September 2, 2008. Direction: Alexander Strain; Stage Management: Jenn Carlson; Assistant Stage Management: Christine Millette; Set Design: Tobias Harding; Costumes: Yvette Ryan; Lighting Design: Andrew F. Griffin; Sound Design: Christopher Baine; Props: Amber Krause and Kaleigh Showers. The original cast was:

Toonsie / Refugee 1.....	Matt "Slice" Hicks
Darby / Refugee 2.....	Brandon McCoy
Festival / Refugee 3.....	Gwen Grastorf
Harvest / Refugee 4.....	Simone Zvi
Graleo.....	John Geoffrion
Gralea / Hermes.....	Sara Barker
War Profiteer 1 / Newscaster.....	Andrew Vergara
War Profiteer 2.....	Matt Dewberry
Havoc / Wedding DJ.....	Joe Brack
War.....	Brian Crane
Peace / Eirene.....	Anastasia Wilson

SETTING

Present day. Carthage, Tennessee, and Mount Olympus.

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

DARBY

Male. White. Resident philosopher-farmhand on a dairy farm.

TOONSIE

Same. Acts older and smarter but really isn't.

GRALEO

Early 40s. White male. Gentleman farmer, inventor, politician.
Never said he invented the Internet.

GRALEA

White, early 40s. GRALEO's wife. Complicit in her own subjection.

EIRENE

Black. Early 40s. GRALEA's neighbor.

HERMES

White, female. Underjobbed and overworked. Bisexual and bipolar. Has boundary issues.

WAR

Older, white male. Like a scary attorney who's on the take.

HAVOC

College boy. Bush to WAR's Cheney.

WAR PROFITEERS

A few years out of college. Loaded. Sociopaths.

REFUGEES

Broken people.

PEACE

Black. Any age. Beautiful and elusive.

HARVEST and FESTIVAL

14. Fraternal twin daughters of PEACE and HAVOC.

NEWSCASTER

White male. Think Brian Williams.

WEDDING DJ

White male. Shock jock who dee-jays weddings on the side. On eleventy different drugs.

Ideally, the actor playing PEACE and EIRENE is the only black actor in the cast.

HOW I USED THE SOURCE MATERIAL

In the original, Trygaeus rides a giant dung beetle to Mount Olympus to tell the gods to stop the Peloponnesian War, only to find that War and Havoc have been keeping Peace in a hole in the ground. I kept the basic plotline, including the standard wedding at the end of any classic comedy, as I wanted to subvert the traditional play structure (and the assumptions that support it) from within its own confines. The most significant change I made was to give the hero a wife as well as a son who was killed in action. I also created a character named Eirene ("Peace" in Greek) to further flesh out the parallel worlds of Mount Olympus and Carthage, Tennessee. As I began writing the play, the Austrian case where a man held his daughter captive in a basement and had fathered several children by her had just broken. As I was finishing the play, I was reading about the psychological makeup of female suicide bombers. I originally wanted Gralea to pull a pin from a hand grenade in the final moments of the play, but I chose to leave the ending open to interpretation, with the taste of holy Greek revenge in her mouth. All the dialogue is original.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

An ellipsis (...) indicates a pause or a trailing off of an unfinished thought.

A dash (—) indicates an interruption.

Where there is a virgule (a slash like this: /) that is the point at which the next character's lines should begin to create an overlapping effect.

I use punctuation alone in a line to indicate a character has a visible response, though no words with which to express that response, and most often it is just a filled stillness. They are not meant to be vocalized. If there are parentheses around the punctuation, then the character's response is readable to the audience, but not the other characters.

NOTE THAT WAS PRINTED IN THE PROGRAM

Peace is never defined in the play. War is. Extensively. Is peace simply the absence of war? Is it its own suppression of sorts, exacting a price so that it might thrive?

Throughout recorded history, organized conflict has been carried out on the planet during all but a few dozen years. People living in conflict feel justified in—and are willing to pay the price for—avenging their loss. Does this give them peace? And is it worth it? And what is the cumulative price of tolerating tiny, pervasive attacks on certain individuals' dignity and worth?

If we choose to not fear something terrifying, can we diminish its power? If we choose to laugh at something horrifying, can we begin to understand it?

"Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him.

"There, in the tent," he said.

Then the Lord said, "I will return this time next year, and Sarah will have a son."

Sarah was listening outside the tent.

She was past the age of childbearing.

So she laughed to herself.

Genesis 18:9

PEACE

As many bodies as possible swiftly and silently come on stage and stand in some formal chorus-like formation spread out across the stage, facing out. Tragically earnest.

A CHORUS MEMBER

one, two, three...

ALL CHORUS

[Audible inhale.]

ANOTHER CHORUS MEMBER

And the land was a place of white stone, impassive and cold.

SOMEONE ELSE

And the people of the land were a mystical tribe.

TIC

Their rituals marked the seasons.

TAC

Their songs honored the skies.

TOE

They were peaceful and the land was plenty.

EENIE

Then invaders crossed the sea to conquer the land. They destroyed the shining temples, raped the women, and took the people captive.

MEENIE

They enslaved them.

ALL CHORUS

[Audible inhale. Or other some such communal punctuation-like movement or sound.]

MY-KNEE

Years passed and a new hope was born in the form of a leader who spoke of the peace of nations.

MOE

And this man led the people to freedom.

SERIOUS PERSON

And as they wandered they fashioned a new story from the wind. The children—

PERSON starts giggling.

SERIOUS PERSON

Is something the matter?

PERSON

No. No. Go on.

SERIOUS PERSON

.

The children grew tired, and so they rode ostriches.

PERSON explodes in laughter.

SERIOUS PERSON

.

PERSON

I'm sorry, I'm sorry. No really, go ahead. I'm fine.

SERIOUS PERSON

.

PERSON

I promise. Seriously.

Seriously.

SERIOUS PERSON

.

The children grew tired, and so they rode ostriches.

INSTIGATOR

[*Sotto voce.*] Which were later cooked and eaten.

SOMEONE ELSE

Which was not so peaceful for the ostriches.

This sends PERSON into a paroxysm of laughter from which he has only a small hope of recovering.

GOOD GUY

GUYS guys guys check yourselves. This is so n-n-not c-c-c-cool.

SERIOUS PERSON

What is so funny!

PERSON

Nothing! Okay! Nothing. I just got the giggles. I'm fine. I'm over it. For real this time.

SERIOUS PERSON

Are you high.

PERSON

No.

INSTIGATOR

[*Imitating SERIOUS PERSON.*] To honoreth the birds, from the skin of the dead ostriches, they fashioneth athletic shoes.

SOMEONE ELSE

Which were then fought over by urban youth. To the death.

PERSON

[*Perhaps rolling on the floor.*] Oh God stop it! I'm totally gonna pee! You guuuuys, *stop!*

SERIOUS PERSON

That's it. I quit.

GOOD GUY

No! See—
C-c-c-come back!

You g-g-g-guys are so im-m-m-m-mature! Now who's gonna finish the p-p-p-prologue.

INSTIGATOR

No one cares about the prologue. That's why people come late to these things.

Come on, guys, let's go play the back nine over at the club.

SOMEONE ELSE

We can't play golf when people are dying in the world.

PERSON

[*This sends PERSON off again.*] I think I just wet myself.

They all trail off, randomly and with imprecision.

An afternoon in late August. Carthage, Tennessee. Outdoors. DARBY and TOONSIE are wrapping cylinders of manure in twine.

DARBY

I don't think there's enough manure here.

TOONSIE

Darby, if'n I told you once I told you a million times, Don't Point Out Problems, Only Solutions. Try "Toonsie, it has come to my attention that we are low on manure, therefore I will take the red wheelbarrow from over by the chicken house and go collect more." See how that's proactive?

DARBY

Don't see why it matters none how I say it when it means the same amount a work.

TOONSIE

Touché.

DARBY

What.

TOONSIE

You proved my point.

DARBY

Ah right. Right.¹

.

You ever wonder what'd happen if you just sat and never moved again?

TOONSIE

Khh. No.

DARBY

.

Do you feel sorry for Missus G?

TOONSIE

No.

¹ *This is what Darby says when he doesn't want to say "Wait what?"*

DARBY

Here's a question for you: How did Adam and Eve know baby Cain and Abel'd grow into people?

TOONSIE

What.

DARBY

How, I mean, if they hadn't seen a child grow from little to big, how would they know that these little things she...y'know what she did—that they'd grow into men?

TOONSIE

They ate from the tree of Knowledge is how.

DARBY

Ah right. Right.

'Cause I was thinkin' what Pastor was sayin' in church, about how God created us with free will right there in Genesis, how it says that...but then when Cain slew his brother Abel, How Did Cain *Know* Abel Was Going To Die.

TOONSIE

What.

DARBY

I mean, if there hadn't a been murder before then, well, then when Cain beat him up maybe he just thought he'd skeer him, you know, knock him around a little so he'd stop showing off. And then when Abel didn't get up afterwards, maybe Cain said, "Hey! Stop foolin' around!" but Abel didn't get up, and so then maybe Cain shook him and said, "Wake up Abel!" 'cause he thought Abel was sleeping, but really Abel was dead and all.

I mean, it almost makes you feel sorry for Cain. He musta really been in a panic when he realized his brother was completely dead.

TOONSIE

DARBY

And then God comes a-lookin, askin', "Where's Abel?" and Cain knows he's in a big kind a trouble, so he just up and lies.

I mean it just seems, even though Cain had free will, that God punished him for lying, not for killing, 'cause maybe he didn't know from killing.

TOONSIE

Cain knew from killing. They'd been killing things for burgers.

DARBY

Ah right. Right. Sheep?

TOONSIE

Yup.

DARBY

Can you have sheep without shepherds?

TOONSIE

No.

DARBY

Hey Toonsie—

TOONSIE

WHAT DARBY WHAT. WHAT IS IT YOU WANNA ASK ME NOW HUH. I'm not your personal Encyclopedia Britaynia.

DARBY

I was just gonna say—

TOONSIE

You'd talk the corn off a cob I swear Darby.

DARBY

I was just gonna say—

TOONSIE

Put your philosophizing on hold—we gotta get all these done by noon o'clock! Focus on the project at hand.

DARBY

I was just gonna say...how do you get yours so neat and small? Mine are all messy.

TOONSIE

You gotta compact it like so for maximum fuel efficiency. Watch. Like this. See? Then I give it one extra squeeze here. See? Then I wind the twine around crossways like this, up and over, and then tuck the ends in. See?

DARBY

I need a break.

TOONSIE

What you need is to stop dilly-dallying.

Darby.

DARBY

What.

TOONSIE

Shouldn't do that.

DARBY

Do what.

TOONSIE

Smoke. Light up.

DARBY

Says who.

TOONSIE

Methane.

DARBY

Who's *Methane*.

TOONSIE

Not who. What. Cow farts. Gas.

DARBY

Like when you light a match after—

TOONSIE

Zactly.

DARBY

All right.

Wait what?

TOONSIE

Meth. Ane. Matches. Prolly / cigarettes too.

DARBY

Stink? I'm not supposed to smoke 'cause of the stink? That don't make sense.

TOONSIE

It's flammable. Gas is flammable. Like in your stove. It's flammable in mass quantities. Whole reason we're doin' this. It's fuel, Darby. Hello.

Think about it. Each one of these tubie-tubes'll burn, crackle the gas, which will escape, rise into the balloon and take Mister G up up and away to Mount Olympus. You light up now and the whole a Carthage Tennessee is kaplow into the sky. Prolly Nashville too.

DARBY

Ah, too hot fer smokin' anyways.

Hey Toonsie, how's fart gas gonna lift a giant balloon in the sky?

TOONSIE

Some gases are lighter'n air.

DARBY

Lighter'n air. Like a angel. Angel farts.

TOONSIE

Heat rises. 'Ts why burger farts waft up to your nose, but beer farts stay down low in your britches.

DARBY

Wouldn't that be the other way around?

TOONSIE

No.

DARBY

.

You ever lay with a colored girl?

Yeah. TOONSIE

You? DARBY

No. TOONSIE

Cain was black. DARBY

Nuh-uh. TOONSIE

God put a mark on him. Mark of Cain. Black. You don't believe me go ask.

I mean, he wasn't dark black like Africa black, but he was black like mixed black. He'd pass the paper bag test.

Huh. DARBY

Wait what? TOONSIE

Paper bag test. Back in the day, colored person's darker'n a paper bag, they couldn't vote or go to school.

No! DARBY

Don't believe me, go ask. TOONSIE

. DARBY

Like a grocery bag paper bag? TOONSIE

Uh-huh. DARBY

Nuh-uh. DARBY

Uh-huh. TOONSIE

Nuh-uh. DARBY

Swear. TOONSIE

... DARBY

Wait what?

. TOONSIE

Ah right. Right. DARBY

So what was it like?

What was what like? TOONSIE

Being with a colored girl. DARBY

Same as a white girl, less liquor. They sure are fertile, though. TOONSIE

? DARBY

Not once but twice pregnant. TOONSIE

You have kids Toonsie!? DARBY

Nope. Fixed that right away both times. TOONSIE

? DARBY