

HOOVER

by Rachel Sheinkin and Barry Drogen

"The act of *creating theatre* has nothing to do with the making of dramatic literature: dramatic literature is what is sometimes left behind when theatre has been and gone." --- "A Good Night Out/Popular Theatre: Audience, Class and Form," John McGrath

"Hoover" was originally created during and for Raw Impressions Music Theatre in New York, NY, 2002. Patrick Mellen and David Rodwin, Founders. Original workshop Production at The Club at La MaMa E.T.C.. The cast was as follows:

Elizabeth "Liz" Racster	Lyric Soprano
Scott Sussman	Tenor
Jake Alrich	Baritone

Director: Marie Louise Miller
Music Director: Douglas Maxwell
Producer/Stage Manager: David Lefkovich

Raw Impressions Music Theatre (RIMT) brought eight composers and eight writers together on February 8, 2002 and randomly paired them. They were also randomly assigned a cast, director and music director. Every team was given the task of creating a piece of music theatre approximately ten minutes in length responding to the following question:

Does Love Transform?

They were also told to include a setting that incorporates the name of a President, and to include at least three of the following:

- One exit or one entrance
- One revelation or one confession
- At least one direct address to the audience
- Three seconds of silence
- One passage in unison
- One inorganic sound (sound effect)
- One moment of interaction between pianist and performer
- Eat or drink one thing
- A moment of violence
- At least one lie
- One space/time continuum shift
- Throw an object
- A moment of dance
- One switch of identity

Although the Composer and Writer did not plan on having a moment of violence or on having anyone throw an object, at different points during both performances Liz accidentally threw her score violently from its music stand. (Coincidence?)

A final libretto and score were due by February 12, 2002 at 5:30 pm. These were delivered to the producers at 5:15 pm. Rehearsals began on the evening of February 15, 2002, with a complete run-through on February 17, 2002. Additional cuts were made to bring the piece to within ten minutes, resulting in 8½ sections (Coincidence?).

The set and props consisted of a piano stage right, four coffee cups, three music stands and three integrated libretto/scores in three ring binders. For some reason unbeknownst to the Composer and Writer, Jake wore a shirt with the words “I LOVE GRANDMA” on it.

As defined by copyright law, “Hoover” is a joint work copyrighted by Rachel Sheinkin and Barry Drogin. This document, prepared by the Composer, represents the libretto of “Hoover” as it was performed on President’s Day, February 18, 2002, for two performances at 7pm and 9pm. The Writer may be creating her own version.

The Writer preferred the titles:

Debris

And:

In the Hoover

The Composer preferred the titles:

Filling the Void

And:

The Unbearable Lightness of Cleaning, or, Much Ado About Nothing

The only title the Writer and Composer could agree on was the first title, suggested by the Composer:

HOOVER

(Setting: In a vacuum. The cast enters.)

JAKE

(Hiss. Suck.)

LIZ

(Hiss. Suck.)

SCOTT

(Hiss. Suck.)

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Now that's a Hoover!

SCOTT

Because this is a piece about vacuums, it will include debris.

JAKE

Discarded notes, fragments.

LIZ

Whatever's in the Hoover. As the rules required, we spoke of transformation.

SCOTT

We thought about doing something where a man turned into a vacuum,

LIZ

Where a vacuum turned into a man,

JAKE

Where an unbelievably gigantic vacuum-sized rat turned into an unbelievably small vacuum-sized rat.

LIZ

We thought about transformation.

SCOTT

We asked each other does love transform and we found we had different answers:

TRIO

Does love transform?

LIZ

Yes.

TRIO

Does love transform?

SCOTT

No.

TRIO

Does love transform?

JAKE

It depends on the circumstance, the kind of love, and what you mean by transformation.

LIZ/SCOTT

(Hiss.)

SCOTT

(Suck.)

JAKE

When the writer and the composer of this piece met, the composer had a lot of things he wanted to do and a lot he would not do.

SCOTT as Composer

He was adamant that he would not set the line:

LIZ as Writer

“Pass me the coffee.”

JAKE

To that end, any time the characters say “pass me the coffee” it will be spoken, not sung.

SCOTT as Composer

He wanted the piece to be self-referential, referring to its own process of creation.

JAKE

To that end, Liz will now re-enact the part of the writer, using the words of the writer to describe her experience.

LIZ as Writer

*“Well, I thought he talked a lot,
And I didn’t do a very good job of getting in my point of view,
But I had a feeling
His music was good,
And I actually liked his aesthetic,
So I just said I was overwhelmed and had to go home.
Later I decided to be inspired by how bad our conversation was.”*

JAKE

Good. Scott will now re-enact the part of the composer, using the words of the composer to justify himself.

LIZ as Writer

But here the writer will arbitrarily assign a word limit to the composer's self expression: Sixty.

SCOTT as Composer

How many did she get?

JAKE

Sixty-one. Go.

SCOTT as Composer

*“She said she was a playwright and had never written opera.
She seemed nice but quiet;
I assumed she was being humble.
I tried to be assuring but I was terrified and talkative.
She took notes and wouldn't commit to anything.
(I assumed she was being humble.
She wouldn't commit to anything.
She wouldn't commit...”)*

LIZ/JAKE

(Hiss.)

SCOTT

(Suck.)

JAKE

Um. Do we get a chance to say what we wanted from this piece? - They act like they care what we want and then they give us this.

SCOTT

I told them I'd go with whatever.

LIZ

(sweetly throughout line)

Me too.... And also that I'd like to have an angry outburst.

JAKE

I told them I'd like to play an abstract quality, like the physical manifestation of statesmanship. I get to play the physical manifestation of a vac-u-um.

JAKE (cont'd)

*An ideal vacuum is devoid of any matter.
It is completely empty.
I am completely empty.
In the void of the vacuum there is no sound.*

(3 seconds of silence.)

*On the other hand, a vacuum cleaner is quite loud!
It cannot remain what it is when it takes in something else.
What we hear when we hear the violent sound of the vacuum
Is the horror of one thing becoming something else.*

LIZ/SCOTT

(Hiss.)

SCOTT

(Suck.)

JAKE

Before I was in love I walked like this...

LIZ/SCOTT

'Fore he was in love...

JAKE

Now I walk like this...

LIZ/SCOTT

Now that he's in love.

SCOTT

Before I was in love I danced like this...

LIZ/JAKE

'Fore he was in love...

SCOTT

Now I dance like this...

LIZ/JAKE

Now that he's in love.

LIZ

Before I was in love I ate like this...

JAKE/SCOTT
'Fore she was in love...

LIZ
Now I eat like this...

JAKE/SCOTT
Now she eats like that.

LIZ
Now I eat like this...

JAKE
Ravenously...

SCOTT
Ravenously...

LIZ
But only when no one is looking.

JAKE
Before I was in love I was a hamburger...

SCOTT
Before I was in love I was a pizza parlor...

JAKE
Now I am a water fountain.

SCOTT
Now I am the cheese itself.

LIZ
Before I was in love I had so many questions...

JAKE/SCOTT
She had so many questions...

LIZ
And no, no answers.

JAKE/SCOTT
No answers.

LIZ

*Now I have so many questions and no answers
But it doesn't bother me as much.*

TRIO

*Before I was in love I moved like this...
Now I move like this...
(Hiss.)*

SCOTT

(Suck.)

SCOTT

Do you all know the story of why the Hoover vacuum cleaner is called a Hoover?

JAKE

Note to writer: find out story and put it in here.

LIZ

If you don't have time to find story, make up something about President Hoover and a chicken in every pot.

SCOTT

It has to do with President Hoover and a chicken in every pot.

LIZ/JAKE

(Hiss.)

SCOTT

(Suck.)

LIZ

*You know what I'm god damn fucking tired of?
I'm tired of people being smarter than everything.
I'm tired of
Like if you say that
"Love is magic"
You're a stupid sentimental schmuck,
And...*

TRIO

Everyone else...

LIZ

Knows better than you

JAKE/SCOTT

And the room fills with...

TRIO

Cynical laughter.

(Pause for cynical laughter.)

LIZ

*Well, put that on your tombstone.
Put that...*

TRIO

“He knew better”

LIZ

And let the lovers come and...

TRIO

Dance on your grave!

LIZ

*Love is fucking magic.
What else is fucking magic?
Yes, I’m single.
Do you have an issue with that?*

SCOTT

Liz said she does not usually get to show her...

TRIO

Dark side...

SCOTT

On stage.

LIZ

I am typecast in sweet pretty roles!

JAKE

But we all have a darker side.

TRIO

Does love transform?

JAKE
Yes.

TRIO
Does love transform?

SCOTT
(surprised at his answer)
Yes.

TRIO
Does love transform?

LIZ
It's just I don't want to transform right now, okay?

SCOTT/JAKE
(Hiss.)

SCOTT
(Suck.)

SCOTT
I knew someone who loved vacuuming. He would vacuum all the time. At first I thought it was a compulsive disorder. Then I realized he was cleaning.

LIZ/JAKE
(Hiss.)

SCOTT
(Suck.)

JAKE
Passami il caffè,

SCOTT
That's "Pass me the coffee" in Italian!

JAKE
Passami il latte,

LIZ
"Pass me the milk."

JAKE
Lo zucchero,

“The sugar.” SCOTT

Grazie, caro, JAKE

“Thank you, beloved.” SCOTT

Per passami il caffè! JAKE

“For passing me the coffee.” LIZ/SCOTT

TRIO
*Adoro come mi passi tutto che voglio.
Sei Così buono a me.
(Suck (no Hiss!))
Grazie!*

(Fine.)

[Composer’s Note: The final three lines translate as follows:

I love the way you pass me everything I need.
You are so good to me.
Thank you!

These English lines were not spoken during the original workshop production.]

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