

P.L.A.Y.

(Performance = Literature + Art + You)

Student Matinee Series 2009-2010 Season

ALMOST, MAINE

WRITTEN by
JOHN
CARIANI

DIRECTED by
SKIP GREER



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Participation in this production and supplemental activities suggested in this guide support the following NYS Learning Standards:

A: 2, 3, 4; ELA: 1, 2, 3; SS: 3

On the cover: Details of scenic designer Dipu Gupta's scale model for the Geva production

Throughout the guide: Costume sketches by Pamela Scofield

Dear Educators,

Almost, Maine has a gentle honesty I enjoy. It introduces its cast of couples and their eccentricities, their hurts and their needs with affection and warmth, as if it really wants us all to get to know each other. Whatever your opinion of sub-zero temperatures, regardless of whether or not you've ever had the chance to see the northern lights, I think you and your students will quickly feel at home with this play. I think we all rather do; the emotional terrain is so familiar.

And speaking of places that you feel at home, I'll take this first letter of the new year as an opportunity to say thank you for choosing to visit Geva and to share this play with your students. We know this contemporary script isn't on anyone's reading list or curriculum map, and that most of you have grappled with the pressures of scheduling and financial logistics in order to make this visit happen. And yet you've all made the investment for your students because you believe – as we do – that the theatre should be a part of their education, their community, and their lives. You've placed your trust in us to share resonant work and excellence in artistry. We are honored by that trust, proud and dedicated to share this vibrant piece of contemporary theatre with you.

On behalf of all of us here at Geva, we wish that your 2010 will be filled with good challenges and great stories. It feels right to begin the year with a play telling the story of many new beginnings, and lucky to have all of you to share it with.

Best,



Kathryn Moroney
Associate Director of Education

Cast of Characters

Pete

Ginette

East

Glory

Jimmy

Sandrine

Waitress

Marvalyn

Steve

Gayle

Lendall

Randy

Chad

Phil

Marci

Hope

Man

Rhonda

Dave

“You know, right now, I think I’m about as close to you as I can possibly be.” - Ginette

Why tell this story?

What emotions are explored in the poem? Can you connect those feelings to experiences in your own life? Based on this poem, what kind of stories do you imagine this play might examine?

What do you believe is art's role in society? Do you think artists have a responsibility to their audience? Why or why not?

At the start of the design process for *Almost, Maine*, director Skip Greer shared this poem (right) with the designers. He also shared it with his cast before their first rehearsal.

When a creative team first begins to define a perspective for a production, they spend a lot of time with the text, mining it for clues and insights. But they'll also begin to look outside the text for inspiration, as well.

A photograph, a painting, a piece of music, or a poem like this one might become a resource and a touchstone for the piece, a metaphorical expression of what the play means to them. Referencing an idea outside the script can be essential to clarifying and unifying the interpretation so that the entire collaboration moves forward with a shared vision. Rather than reiterating what the piece already says, looking at a separate image allows the artists to say, "our production should be like this," or "we should avoid that," and they can begin to talk about how to bring the production toward that idea. That metaphorical reference point is like a compass, a gauge they can use to evaluate the many creative ideas they will generate, and measure their progress relative to a goal they've defined.

Theatre artists will use metaphor not only to define what story they want to tell, but why they feel the need to tell it – to find the personal connection that fuels their work and makes it essential. Consider this image Skip showed his production team.

His reflections: "The picture was taken in 1992 following a bombing in Sarajevo that left 22 dead. The mortar had hit a busy marketplace at 4 p.m. The pictured cello player, Vedran



Smailovich, of the Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra, who lived in this square, decided to play the cello in the rubble of the war zone for 22 consecutive days. This was this cellist's response, bringing art to the chaos around him – a daily reminder of what's really important. In our own gentle way, I think that's what *Almost, Maine* is doing in the Geva season. It's our reminder to the community of Rochester of what's really important as we move through our day. There's less rubble around us certainly, but we all have struggles of our own these days.... I want people to walk out of the theatre not taking love for granted. I remember hearing a while ago that without inspired acts to remind us, no generation resumes the search for love. These scenes can be those inspired acts. I feel alive when I touch them, and feel the spark of wonder and curiosity in each of them." ♦

"George Gray"
by Edgar Lee Masters
(from *Spoon River Anthology*)

I have studied many times
The marble which was chiseled for me—
A boat with a furled sail at rest in a harbor.
In truth it pictures not my destination
But my life.
For love was offered me and I shrank from its
disillusionment;
Sorrow knocked at my door, but I was afraid;
Ambition called to me, but I dreaded the
chances.
Yet all the while I hungered for meaning in my
life.
And now I know that we must lift the sail
And catch the winds of destiny
Wherever they drive the boat.
To put meaning in one's life may end in madness,
But life without meaning is the torture
Of restlessness and vague desire—
It is a boat longing for the sea and yet afraid.

"Wes, I have a new heart now.
I'm sorry... It doesn't want you back..." - Glory

Why Maine?

Did you know?

Maine's unorganized territories make up more than half of the state's total land area.

Maine is more forested than any other state in the country. It is 90% woods.

Almost, Maine would be located 120 miles north of Mt. Katahdin, in the heart of Aroostook County.

Aroostook is the largest county east of the Mississippi River, with a land area of 6,700 square miles. It is almost as big as Massachusetts.

Aroostook County is considerably larger than Connecticut (4,800 sq. mi.) and Rhode Island 0,045 sq. mi.) put together.

Aroostook County's population is about 72,000, making it one of the most sparsely populated counties east of the Mississippi. (Connecticut and Rhode Island's combined population is 4.5 million.) Aroostook has about 11 people per square mile, making it about as densely populated as the Dakotas.

Almost Population: probably about 300.

Consider visiting www.crownofmaine.com for photos of Northern Maine. Look for links to photos by Paul Cyr.

The play is set in, “Various locales in Almost, Maine, a small town in northern Maine that doesn't quite exist. The present. Everything takes place at nine o'clock on a cold, clear, moonless, slightly surreal Friday night in the middle of the deepest part of a northern Maine winter.”

Playwright John Cariani explains, “Where I grew up has had a huge influence on me. It's a place where there aren't many people and there's lots of sky. The world feels much bigger there somehow.... So the play is mostly a tribute to that place – a place where there seems to be so much possibility because there's time and space to daydream.”



Cariani's notes on Northern Maine:

Almost, Maine is not a coastal town. It is nowhere near the ocean. It is a mythical composite of several northern Maine towns. Were it to exist, Almost would be located in the remote heart of Aroostook (say, uh-ROO-stick) County, the sparsely populated, northernmost county in Maine. It would occupy unorganized territory that is officially designated as Township Thirteen, Range Seven, or T13-R7. T13-R7 is some seventy-five miles northwest of the northern terminus of Interstate 95; some two hundred miles northwest of the ocean (at its closest); some three hundred miles north of Portland, ME; and some four hundred miles north of Boston, MA. It is far away from things.

Winters in Almost, Maine are long, cold, and snowy. It often feels like winter up there from October to May. The area's average January temperature is nine degrees Fahrenheit; average annual snowfall is 115 inches. Winters can also be pretty bleak, because the days are short (less than nine hours at the winter solstice), and the town is in a rolling, empty land of wide open space and big sky. Potato farms dominate to the east; the expansive North Maine Woods are to the west. National Geographic once printed something to this effect: “They call Montana ‘Big Sky Country.’ Well ... ‘they’ haven't seen Northern Maine.”

Cariani on the Northern Lights:



Northern Mainers are fortunate: They live just inside the southernmost tip of a ring defining the area in which the northern lights regularly appear. Growing up, I remember being treated to a northern lights show at least once a year.

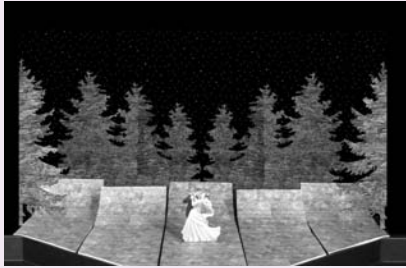
What does the description of a “slightly surreal Friday night” suggest to you? What makes a setting surreal?

What might be the significance of naming this fictional town “Almost?”

After you've seen the play, discuss the importance of the setting. Could the story take place in an urban location? In a warmer season?

“I'm glad you got found.” - Jimmy

The Northern Lights occur when atoms become ‘excited.’ During solar storms, electrons are sent streaming towards the earth. As these electrons enter the earth's atmosphere, they strike and excite atoms, ionizing them – charging them by knocking out an electron. When this happens to enough atoms, the brilliant light display that is the aurora borealis hovers and streaks across the sky. When the aurora fades, it's because the affected atoms have returned to their grounded state. *Almost, Maine* is a play about people who are normally very grounded, but who have become very excited by love ... and other extraordinary occurrences.”



Shifts in Dipu Gupta's stage design change the lens on the story.

Creating Maine on stage:

Photographs of the northern lights have fascinated the artists working on the Geva production. As Director Skip Greer points out, most people have a general idea of what the northern lights look like; we take their existence for granted. But the actual images are astonishing in their vivid, otherworldly beauty, which can be both magical and frightening. Since the imperative not to take such wonder for granted is a core theme of this production, the design has evolved accordingly.

Skip says, “The central design notion of the play is that ‘Matters of the heart are the lenses that allow us to see the magic and wonder that always exists around us, and almost always goes unnoticed.’ With each exposure to a piece of magic – we should be drawn in closer. We have two irises to use to draw us deeper into the play, the downstage and upstage trees, and the stars can feel as though they come out toward us. We’re playing with the final image of a couple on a bench together, and exploring ways for the stars to surround them. I’d like the last moment we have with them to be magical...”

“I think this will also be about size – the sweep of the sky, the vastness of the Northern Lights reminding us that the love we create and hold onto makes us a part of something much larger – hopeful and scary. To feel that vastness, I know that I’ll keep it sparse and fluid...”

The noted theatre designer Robert Edmond Jones paraphrased Ralph Waldo Emerson when he wrote, “The artist should omit the details, the prose of nature and give us only the spirit and splendor.” Geva’s production provides a starry canopy and lens which focuses on the human stories against the backdrop of winter night. Simple, minimal furniture and props anchor each scene. These objects are warm and worn, like the clothes the characters are wearing. Skip and designer Dipu Gupta agreed that furnishings should look lived-in, and provide a distinct contrast to the cool and abstracted landscape. These physical elements will help to create stories of real, grounded people living in a world wide open with possibility, one where almost anything can -- and will -- happen on one extraordinary night.

Skip concludes, “...when I’m alone out in the countryside, and I look up to take in the awe and beauty of a clear, stunning, impeccable starry night, I feel the impulse to have someone standing beside me to show it to. Just a hand in my hand as I look up. That’s what this show is about.” ♦

There are many folk stories about the nature of the northern lights. How have different cultures described them? Are there any elements in common?

Make note of your first impression of the set when you enter the theatre. Each scene will transform with only minimal changes. Why do you think the team selected the scenic pieces they did for each story? Did you find the shifts effective at establishing new locations and moods?

“Well, buddy, you can be hurt and not even look like it” - Marvalyn

Synopsis

Almost, Maine introduces 19 characters at crucial moments of choice in their relationships with one another. The scenes occur in different locations around the town of Almost, and each has its own crisis, its own emotional temperature, and its own stakes. And in each, there's an element of wonder or "magic," briefly noted here. (Please see further discussion on page 7.)

Director Skip Greer has distilled the story of each scene into a short phrase about love – at least as he interprets it for this production. Do you draw the same conclusions? These phrases can also stimulate useful investigations. You might use creative writing (stories, poems, monologues or dialogues) to explore the ideas such as "Love takes risks." You might look for existing works of literature or art that express these key motifs, and compare and contrast following the play.

Prologue

"Love takes risks."

Pete and Ginette sit on a bench in Pete's yard, looking at the stars. They dare to speak the words, "I love you," and enjoy the shared closeness that creates. But Pete describes his thoughts about being "close," and they don't match Ginette's.

Magic in this scene: hasn't happened yet – but we haven't seen the last of this couple.

Her Heart

"Love happens to you."

Glory clutches a small brown paper bag to her chest as she looks up at the sky. East, a repairman, comes outside to learn about the woman camped out on his yard. Glory travelled to Maine in order to see the northern lights, which she believes will give her the opportunity to pay her respects to the spirit of her husband, Wes, who left her for another woman and broke her heart. Her heart, which "doesn't work anymore," is in the paper bag, and it keeps ending up in East's hands.

Magic: A heart is actually physically broken into pieces of slate, and begun to be put back together.



This Hurts

"Love hurts, and that's good."

Friday night finds Marvalyn and Steve in the laundry room of Ma Dudley's Boarding House. Absorbed in her own concerns, Marvalyn accidentally knocks Steve down with an ironing board, but he reports that he has congenital analgesia and "can't feel pain." They discuss whether bleeding and bruising are the only forms of hurt, whether love can hurt, whether Marvalyn is in love, and whether Steve will ever be. An unexpected kiss puts all these questions to the test.

Magic: Love repairs a medical problem.

Sad and Glad

"Love must grow, or it gets stuck."

Jimmy sits alone in a back corner of the local hang-out, the Moose Paddy as a bachelorette party in full swing dominates the other side of the bar. The bachelorette in question is Sandrine, Jimmy's ex; she disappeared one night, without explanation, and he's thrilled to see her walk by. In their reunion she confesses that she's about to be married, and Jimmy searches for how to let her – and himself – move on. Their waitress, Villian, reminds him of the Friday night special: "drink free if you're sad," but Jimmy doesn't take her up on the offer.

Magic: A tattoo reveals a coincidence of miraculous proportion or a clear cut example of fate.

Getting it Back

"Love demands commitment, and you have to work at it."

Gayle awakens her longtime boyfriend, Lendall; she's concluded that the relationship has come to a dead-end. She hauls big bags of the love he gave her into his living room and demands he return all the love she gave to him. Lendall doesn't know how to respond except to offer one tiny bag for her. Gayle denies that a small sack can represent all the love she gave, until she discovers the diamond ring inside.

Magic: Love is physically bagged and transported.

"I'm getting all the love you gave to me, and I'm giving it back to you." - Gayle

Please note that this synopsis reveals key plot points and recognitions which are essential to the dramatic impact of this work. While we encourage you to reference this information in preparation for classroom activities, we recommend not sharing these summaries prior to the performance.

They Fell

“Love requires friendship, and knows no boundaries.”

Randy and Chad, two “Aroostook County boys” hang out in a potato field drinking beer and trading stories about their terrible dates. If only they could skip the discomfort and awkwardness of those nights out and simply spend the time in known good company. Chad confesses that there isn’t much that makes him happy or feels right in his life, but that Randy is that thing. Unsure how to handle this disclosure, Randy tries to head home, but Chad collapses to the ground – he’s fallen in love. Randy is furious at his inappropriate betrayal of their friendship. Then he collapses, too.

Magic: The physical manifestation of love causes knees to literally buckle.



Where it Went

“Love untended, dies.”

Phil and Marci have just been skating on Echo Pond, where once they shared their first kiss. It might be an anniversary celebration...if Phil would remember the special date. Marci’s disappointment and her determination to create a good time prevent her from speaking honestly, and Phil armors himself against her accusations and secrecy. They both vent their frustration as they search for Marci’s second shoe, mysteriously gone missing. With their mutual confession of loneliness and, “I don’t have fun with you anymore,” they wonder what they’re waiting for. The shoe drops.

Magic: A shoe falls out of the sky.

Story of Hope

“Love not acted upon, creates a void.”

Hope rings a doorbell late in the evening. Daniel Harding proposed to her on the night before she was to leave Almost for college, and she never answered him. She comes back to his family home, trusting that he’ll still be there, but a quiet, smaller stranger greets her. She pours out her guilt over leaving Danny unanswered and her fear of being “alone out there in the world with no place in it,” before realizing that the man is Danny, shrunken and transformed because he “lost a lot of hope.” Danny thanks her for coming back, but before Hope can finally answer him, his wife calls him back inside.

Magic: A person grows smaller while pining away.

Seeing the Thing

“Love strips us to the bare soul.”

Rhonda is a tough woman, and Dave is the not-so-tough man who loves her. He’s painted her a picture and presents it as a gift, but it’s hard for Rhonda to accept a gift from her guy friend. The painting is just a simple red heart, though Rhonda can’t see that, and Dave confides that everyone is rooting for them as a couple, despite Rhonda’s hang-ups. Dave’s kiss forces her to confess she’s never been kissed before. It also makes it possible for her to recognize the heart he gave her, and awakens her curiosity about what else they can discover together.

Magic: Perspective changes, and love enables one to see something to which they were previously blind.

Epilogue

“Love requires perseverance (...and makes the world go around.)”

When Ginette walked away, Pete told her she was getting “closer” with each step – which would make sense, if she had to walk a path around the world to come back to his other side. As he keeps watch where she left, she reappears behind him – from the other direction! She’s been all the way around, and is back, “closer” again.

Magic: Someone literally goes around the world.

“Yup, that’s what that was.
Me falling in love with you...” - Chad

Why magic?

Have you encountered works of magical realism, such as those by Gabriel García Márquez? How would you compare those to this play?

Can you think of other common idioms using metaphor? Imagine a scenario where that metaphor could be expressed as a literal situation.

“John Cariani calls it ‘a midwinter night’s dream.’ I like that. I think that if Gabriel García Márquez were from Northern Maine he might have written a play like this.”
- Director Skip Greer

“The plot of each scene in *Almost, Maine* climaxes with some sort of ‘magical moment.’ I have this notion that the magical moments in all of the scenes are happening at exactly the same time – as the clock strikes nine – and that the northern lights and these magical moments are giving rise to one another...this play is all about one moment in time – what happens to people in a heartbeat.”
- Playwright John Cariani

What does it mean to “fall in love?” This idiom has so completely entered colloquial usage as to draw no notice; the meaning is immediately understood and requires no analysis. But what if we do investigate the phrase as a piece of figurative language, and consider the implications. What is it about “falling” that describes the experience of emergent attraction? Is it the helplessness or loss of control? The awareness of an external force (like gravity) that trumps free will? Or is it the surprise and suddenness? Is it a personal experience within the body? Do we associate falling with a physical sensation of weakness? Lost equilibrium or vertigo? Or is the important quality of falling the impact and consequences of the landing? Is there peril or danger – as with falling from a height? Would falling in love be skydiving from a plane...or being pushed off a cliff? We can compare all these potential interpretations against our own experiences, or within the context of an unfolding story.

Take the two men – best friends – who fall in love in the scene “They Fell.” Are they surprised by the event? Is it choice or accident? Are they instigators, victims, or partners in the experience? Can they ignore what’s been said or felt? Can love be denied or forgotten? When it’s manifest as a physical collapse on the stage, how does that influence their response? As a literal, paralyzing obstacle that prevents them from leaving a scene, their falling has a certain power. What does this allow the playwright and the actors to express to their audience?



These are the sorts of experiments and discoveries proposed over and over by the script of *Almost, Maine*; in one way or another actors are testing out answers to these questions in each scene. (What would you do if someone gave you their heart, or their love – as an object you could hold? Does love hurt? Does it heal?) Metaphor is made literal, and challenges characters to respond. The effect in performance is surprising, and often very funny. But perhaps most importantly, the investigation the playwright offers is the chance to find what’s true; what do we understand because these circumstances are lived in front of us? The “make-believe” of putting on a play, theatre artists often point out, means the stories aren’t real, but they are still true. The magical elements of this script serve that goal of truth, just as most every work of fiction, every poem, every piece of art does in its own fashion.

John Cariani reflects: Although I don’t think I’ve written poetic language – I think I have written poetic situations. This is the kind of poetry I like: poetry that is well disguised; poetry that sneaks up on an audience; poetry that surprises. Unexpected poetry gets people where it counts in their hearts and souls. He also reminds us that the goal of this poetry is expressly to create a play about real people who are really, truly, honestly dealing with the toughest thing there is to deal with in life: love. ♦

Above: Randy and Chad
from costume designer
Pamela Scofield’s
sketches
Previous page:
Sandrine and Steve

“You say you’re not mad, but you’re mad.
You say you have fun, but you didn’t.” - Phil

What's at stake?

“If love isn’t scary, exhilarating and full of risk then you’re taking it for granted. And you could lose it...This play is about the delicious, terrifying, exhilarating risk of falling in love – its cost and its value, the consequences of taking, or not taking, that risk.”

– Director Skip Greer

Do we wait for our lives to happen to us, or must we make choices and choose to engage? Does love happen to us, or do we create it? Skip says, “I think we sucker ourselves into believing that it’s only the first half of that equation.” The characters in *Almost, Maine* take risks for what they want, and deal with the consequences. As a result this play provides the opportunity to discuss the moments of choice and fundamental risks that we regularly take in our relationships – romantic or otherwise – every time we communicate, or fail to communicate, our needs and wishes. To speak up or stay silent? To conceal or confess? To give or to take? Watching for those risks can be a fruitful avenue to discuss theme and character. And by asking the corollary question – “What would I do in that situation?” – we can begin to discover resonances and connections in our own lives. What is it that makes a risk worth taking?

The play starts with a simple but significant risk. Consider the first example from the “Prologue.” You might read the excerpt silently, but it may be more satisfying to experiment aloud:

GINETTE: Pete – ...

PETE: *(Turning to Ginette.)* Yeah?

GINETTE: I love you.

(Beat. Pete just stares at Ginette. Beat. Pete looks away from Ginette. Beat. And does not respond. Beat.

Ginette takes in Pete's reaction; deflates; then looks away from him, trying to figure out what has happened.

We now have two very uncomfortable people. Pete is dealing with what Ginette has just said to him; Ginette is dealing with Pete's response – or lack thereof – to what she has just said. Big... long ... pause. Finally, there's nothing else for Pete to say but the truth, which is:)

PETE: I ... love you, too.

GINETTE: Oh!!! *(Huge relief Pete and Ginette feel JOY! Ginette shivers — a happy kind of shiver.)*

In this excerpt the playwright provides a great deal of description, almost like the narrator in a work of prose. Of course in a play that information isn’t provided; it must be translated through the actors’ performance. John Cariani suggests, “Honor the beats – the quiet moments....Find where the words come tumbling out of the characters' mouths. Find where the words don't come so easy – where the quiet moments are. Much is ‘said’ in those quiet moments. The play must continue to move forward inside those quiet moments.”

One of the ways actors will approach their work is to create an inner monologue for themselves, which is to imagine and investigate their character’s stream of consciousness within a scene. Can you imagine what Pete and Ginette are actually thinking in the silence? Try writing that inner monologue, or perhaps improvise the scene that would occur if they spoke their thoughts aloud.

You may find you need to add a few tools that can help mine the subtext of the scene:

What are the **given circumstances**? These are the who, what, when, and where that must be considered for their influence on character behavior. They might include the age of the character, how long the characters have known one another, whether they are in public or private, where they have come from and where they are going next, or other relevant circumstances that will inform their needs, wishes and actions.

“And that’s kinda like giving’ somebody
a little less air to breathe every day.” - Man

What is the character's **objective or intention**? What is it they are trying to accomplish? It may or may not be what they say it is; they may never state it at all. What motivates them? What do they want to make happen? Usually it's something they need to get from the other character. What would be a "successful" outcome to the situation they are in?

What is the character's **obstacle**? What's preventing them from getting what they want? This conflict is what creates drama on stage. Characters – like real people – are always solving problems.

What are the **stakes**? What is the risk or potential danger? What are the consequences of failure? This illuminates how urgently the character will pursue their objective.

Here are two more excerpts from the play. Apply these questions to the scenes to see what interpersonal story you create. What are these characters expressing successfully? What not? Can you create a character's inner monologue? (You may want to refer to pages 5 and 6 for some given circumstances of these scenes.)

JIMMY: Sandrine!	SANDRINE: Doin' pretty good!	SANDRINE: Yeah.
SANDRINE: Hmm? <i>(Beat. This is a bit awkward – awful, actually. Then, overcompensating.)</i> Jimmy!	How are you doin'?!?	JIMMY: That's great!
JIMMY: Hey!	JIMMY: I'm good, I'm good! How are ya?!?	SANDRINE: Yeah.
SANDRINE: Hey!	SANDRINE: I'm good, doin' good, great! How are you?	JIMMY: You look great!
JIMMY: Hey!!	JIMMY: Great, great! How are ya?	SANDRINE: Oh ...
SANDRINE: Hey!!	SANDRINE: Great, great!	JIMMY: You look great.
JIMMY/SANDRINE: <i>(Jimmy hugs Sandrine. Sandrine doesn't really take the hug or hug him back.)</i>	JIMMY: Oh, that's great!	SANDRINE: Thanks.
Heyyyy!!!	SANDRINE: Yeah!	JIMMY: You do. You look so great.
JIMMY: How you doin'?!?	SANDRINE: Yeah!	SANDRINE: Thanks, Jimmy.
	JIMMY: That's great!	JIMMY: SO pretty. So pretty.
		SANDRINE: Thanks. <i>(Beat.)</i>
		JIMMY: Here, have a seat.

Experiment with changing the tempo of the delivery for each character, or the volume. Experiment with changing the objective. How many different stories can you tell with this dialogue? What version is the safest? Which involves the most risk?

HOPE: I know this isn't going to be very easy, but I was just out there all alone in the world, and I got so scared, because all I could think about was how I had no place in this world, but then I just outta nowhere realized that there was one place in this world that I did have, and that was with you, so I flew and I took a taxi to get to you, I just had to come see you, *(Finally really looking at him.)* Thank God you're – ... *(The man is not who she thought he'd be.)* Oh – ... Wait. – ... I'm sorry. You're not – ... I'm – *(Checking to make sure she's at the right place.)* This is the house – ... I'm so sorry – ... Does Daniel Harding live here? I'm looking for Daniel Harding.

An observation from the playwright: "The characters from out of town talk more, and faster, than the people of Almost. They have most of the play's monologues. They use words to cover, to protect themselves, to push people away." Does this perspective make sense with the inner monologue you imagine?

When you attend the play at Geva, can you sometimes "hear" the inner monologues in the actors' performances? Are there particular moments or actions that make those internal thoughts come across clearly? Are there particular characters you find most accessible and for whom it is easiest to imagine their thoughts? Focus on how a character deals with risk – could you see their moment of choice? How did you see them deal with the consequences of that risk? ♦

"Together?!? What are you talkin' about, 'together'???" - Rhonda

Further Explorations

Staff

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The Geva production of *Almost, Maine* includes the creation of a completely original score from composer John Zeretzke. The musical themes he's created can offer lightness as well as the sounds of loneliness and longing, and will be mixed with a soundscape created by designer Dan Roach that evokes the winter environment of Maine. The score's instrumentation includes Swedish nyckelharpa, guitar, violin, oboe and English horn. The nyckelharpa is a unique instrument chosen in part as an authentic folk sound for Northern Maine.



Guitarist Alan Thornhill in the recording studio



Swedish nyckelharpa

You may also enjoy traveling to other parts of the world with John Zeretzke's music. He's an artist with a wealth of experience in world music; to sample his work, visit http://www.zworldmusic.com/educational_frame.html.



Get acquainted with this folk instrument; performances on nyckelharpa are easy to find on YouTube. What does its sound suggest about the score? Does the choice of instrument suggest anything to you about the world of this play?

We can't wait to hear your thoughts about the play. Please plan to join us for the post-show talkback.

We love to receive your letters, reviews, questions and feedback. Send us mail!

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“But...now you're closer.” - Pete

Behind the Scenes with Geva

This classroom workshop takes a peek at the magic behind the scenes, revealing many of the elements that go into the full production of a play. Participants follow the creation of a performance, from the initial selection of a script through the conception and realization of the scenic, costume, lighting and sound design that ultimately enhance the performances of actors bringing a play to life on the stage. A pair of Geva's professional artist educators will travel to your school to conduct this workshop.



Behind the Scenes with Geva is just one of four in our Touchstone Workshops series. To read about the other workshops in the series, please go to www.gevatheatre.org/learn/touchstone-workshops.html

Hands On Teacher Workshops



A series of workshops designed to inspire and ignite the artist inside you. Come participate in diverse elements of making theatre by enrolling in a single workshop or the series.

Workshops will be conducted on February 27 & 28, 2010. For more information, please contact Associate Director of Education Kathryn Moroney at kmoroney@gevatheatre.org or (585) 232-1366, ext. 3058.

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