

COMMUNICATION

By Thomas Misuraca

WHY WE LIKE IT: *A short smart savvy little parody on the wiles of wily communication. Half sentences, snatches of dialogue, incomplete phrases force the mind to formulate the fragments into meaningful content. But what is meaningful? Neither character allows the other to finish what he's saying; body language and hand gestures are more baffling than explanatory and proper names trigger trajectories that spin into wild inference. Every reader of this play will take away something different in terms of the past behavior of the two men. This is theatre in which the viewer gets so mentally involved trying to nail down what's being said, that he/she becomes, in effect, a third character by association. A strong well written serio-comic performance without an ounce of fat. (Spacing is author's own.)*

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CHARACTERS: DERRICK. An average man, same age as CHARLIE.

TIME. The present.

LIGHTS UP ON: (A generic street corner. DERRICK and CHARLIE enter at the same time from opposite ends of the stage. They cross, and stop in recognition. They turn to face each other.)

DERRICK

Charlie!

CHARLIE

Derrick!

DERRICK

Wow. I haven't seen you since that thing they threw for what's her name.

CHARLIE

That's right. She was a character. Too bad about the...

(CHARLIE gestures to the top half of his body.)

DERRICK

She cut it off.

CHARLIE

It grew back.

DERRICK

Really?

CHARLIE

Yeah, she may cut it off again.

DERRICK

And her husband?

(CHARLIE shakes his head, sadly.)

DERRICK

He was so young. Was it...?

(CHARLIE nods.)

DERRICK

But I thought he-

CHARLIE

The baboon was incompatible.

DERRICK

That's a shame. But how about you? You still over there?

(DERRICK points behind him with his thumb.)

I left there ages ago. CHARLIE

You were so happy there. DERRICK

I wasn't. CHARLIE

But you used to rave about- DERRICK

They got rid of that. CHARLIE

That was their signature service! DERRICK

Blame the Japanese. CHARLIE

I thought your wife was- DERRICK

Chinese. CHARLIE

And she's- DERRICK

Content. CHARLIE

Whatever happened to-? DERRICK

Seattle. CHARLIE

How about-? DERRICK

No clue. CHARLIE

And-? DERRICK

CHARLIE

Excommunicated.

DERRICK

I figured after the cardinal incident...

CHARLIE

Do you still see-?

DERRICK

I saw him at a function last month.

CHARLIE

So you're still involved-

DERRICK

Barely.

CHARLIE

Tough times all around.

DERRICK

Not as bad as back then.

CHARLIE

At least back then we had all that other stuff.

DERRICK

We still have that.

DERRICK

We still have that.

CHARLIE

It's not the same.

DERRICK

Things change.

CHARLIE

That didn't have to.

DERRICK

Nobody was invested anymore.

CHARLIE

Well, after Ellen-

DERRICK

Nobody could prove that.

It was pretty obvious. CHARLIE

To whom? DERRICK

Everybody. CHARLIE

No, it wasn't. DERRICK

Are you two still...? CHARLIE

(CHARLIE makes an odd gesture with his hands.)

No! DERRICK

You are! CHARLIE

Not recently. DERRICK

But after the incident. CHARLIE

So? DERRICK

I'd assume... CHARLIE

She went to therapy. DERRICK

You repeat the same patterns, don't you? CHARLIE

No. DERRICK

First it was Juan. CHARLIE

Juan and I never- DERRICK

C'mon! CHARLIE

You're jealous because you wanted to. DERRICK

With Juan? Ha! CHARLIE

You were stuck with Julie. DERRICK

Leave Julie alone. CHARLIE

She can't use that excuse forever. DERRICK

Why not? You do. CHARLIE

I do not! DERRICK

I do not! DERRICK

You used it the last time we- CHARLIE

You're dreaming! DERRICK

Not any more, since Dr. Falk put me on that medication. CHARLIE

You went to see him? DERRICK

Yes. CHARLIE

Did you tell him about me? DERRICK

CHARLIE
He knew.

DERRICK
He did?

CHARLIE
Everybody knows.

DERRICK
Not everybody knows.

CHARLIE
They will if you're-
(bizarre hand
gesture again)
-with Ellen.

DERRICK
It's nobody's business if I-
(makes similar
but different
hand gesture)
-with Ellen. Why don't you go-
(third
unrecognizabl
e hand
gesture)
-yourself!

CHARLIE
You're just as bad as you were back then.

DERRICK
And you're just as suspicious.

CHARLIE
I have to be with you!

DERRICK
You never were with Craig.

CHARLIE
Craig earned my trust.

DERRICK
More like he bought it.

CHARLIE

That was a gift.

DERRICK

Sure, because everybody gives gifts like that.

CHARLIE

My friends do.

DERRICK

Do they supply the U-Haul, or do you?

CHARLIE

Depends on the person.

DERRICK

All of that but I still got Juan to... you know.

CHARLIE

I know! We all know!

DERRICK

Your wife didn't know.

CHARLIE

Leave her out of this.

DERRICK

You're the one who brought her in.

CHARLIE

Once.

DERRICK

But she had the leather skirt.

CHARLIE

She borrowed that from a friend.

DERRICK

Likely story.

CHARLIE

You're jealous.

DERRICK

Of her? Never.

CHARLIE

The way she-

(CHARLIE looks around cautiously and then whispers something in DERRICK's ear.)

DERRICK

Please, anybody with an elementary school education could do that.

CHARLIE

Juan couldn't.

DERRICK

Shows what you know.

CHARLIE

Juan could?

DERRICK

Like a pro!

CHARLIE

You're lying.

DERRICK

You're the liar. You lied to-

CHARLIE

I didn't lie to her. I didn't get her involved.

DERRICK

She's going to find out someday.

CHARLIE

She won't because she...

(falls sullen)

She...

DERRICK

She didn't?

(CHARLIE nods sadly.)

DERRICK

Not with-?

(CHARLIE nods again.)

I'm so sorry.

DERRICK

I thought she-

CHARLIE

Me, too. The way she-

DERRICK

She was no Juan.

CHARLIE

But better than Craig.

DERRICK

I miss her so much.

CHARLIE

I'm sorry.

DERRICK

And I'm sorry for-

CHARLIE

(CHARLIE gestures
"everything" with both
hands.)

That's very big of you.

DERRICK

I do miss you. The way you used to-

CHARLIE

(CHARLIE makes a sly
gesture.)

I miss that too.

DERRICK

You had the best equipment.

CHARLIE

You had the best equipment.

CHARLIE

DERRICK

Juan liked it.

CHARLIE

And have you two-

(CHARLIE makes a
gesture.)

Not since...

DERRICK

But you and Ellen...

CHARLIE

DERRICK

I'd rather not. But without Juan, there's nobody.

CHARLIE

There's me.

DERRICK

Is there?

CHARLIE

If you want.

DERRICK

I want.

(They hug for a long time
as the lights slowly fade.)

THE END

THE PLAYWRIGHT SPEAKS: I've always been fascinated in how people who know each other well communicate without saying much. I thought that would be a fun premise for the play, where the reader would not know exactly what the characters are talking about, but still engaged by the passion of their story telling. Please don't think the dialogue in Communication is random. I know exactly what they are talking about. It may be a little surreal, but what they communicate is linear. I'm not asking the reader to figure out what I meant, but instead to find their own meaning in these words. If any.

It will come as no surprise to hear my greatest influence for this one was Samuel Beckett.

Communication was first stage read at the Alliance of Los Angeles playwrights' yearly play festival, way back in 2009. It was then produced at PianoFight's ShortLived 3.0 in Los Angeles, where it won 2nd place audience favorite.

BIO: I studied Writing, Publishing and Literature at Emerson College in Boston before moving to Los Angeles. Over 80 of my short stories and two novels have been published. Most recently, my story, Masks was published in *The Writer's Cafe Magazine*. I am also a multi-award winning playwright with over 100 short plays and 9 full-lengths produced globally. My musical, Geeks!, was produced Off-Broadway in May.