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Hannah and Hanna

A play

John Retallack

Samuel French — London

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Hannah and Hanna was first published in the volume *The Drama Book* (English and Media Centre, 2002)

HANNAH AND HANNA

First presented by the Channel Theatre Company in Margate on the 20th June 2001, with the following cast:

Hannah	Alyson Coote
Hanna	Celia Meiras

Directed by John Retallack
Designed by Phil Newman
Choreographed by Andy Howitt
Music arranged by Karl James
Lighting designed by Nicci Spalding

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CHARACTERS

Hannah: English; 16
Hanna (Xhevahinja): ethnic Albanian asylum-seeker from Kosovo; 16

Other characters played by **Hannah**:

Joe: Hannah's brother, a new policeman; 22
Nan: Hannah's grandmother; 75
Bullfrog: Hannah's bloke, unemployed; 18

Other characters played by **Hanna**:

Albin: Hanna's brother, an engineering student; 19
Flora: Hanna's mother, a recent widow, a doctor in Kosovo; 38
Bullfrog: Hannah's bloke, unemployed; 18

The action of the play is set in Margate and Kosovo

Time — summer 1999 to spring 2000

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Hannah and Hanna is a play for two young actors. It is about English teenagers finding the arrival of asylum-seekers in their area very hard to handle. Of course, stories around this theme are normally the other way about. It is the journey of the refugee that is the stuff of drama. I want to look at the situation another way. I want to acknowledge the role of us, the English audience, in the drama. "We" are the hosts who determine the fate of such people, our guests. "We" are thus central characters, rather than onlookers and outsiders. To the asylum-seekers, "we" are certainly the main players. There are some wonderfully inspiring accounts of English people who have acted magnanimously. There are many more accounts of English people who have not.

My play begins with a young English girl, still at school, who is the child of such people. Drama requires conflict, and, for a young English audience, this is where the story of the asylum-seekers begins — in their home town and in conflict.

That's why I want to start with teenagers. They mimic the attitudes of their parents, yet, unlike their parents, they can change their minds. If they can change their minds, they can still change the world. I read that the build-up of peoples wandering the world without a country to return home to (because of flood, famine or war) will increase many many times over in the course of the next five to ten years. It's the dull and cursing hosts — and, most of all, their children — that hold the destiny of these peoples in their hands.

John Retallack

HANNAH AND HANNA: PERFORMANCE HISTORY

Hannah and Hanna was first performed at the Channel Theatre Company Studio on June 21, 2001 by Alyson Coote as Margate Hannah and Celia Meiras as Kosovan Hanna.

This cast performed the play over a hundred times at several venues – the Gilded Balloon in Edinburgh for a month, the Arcola Theatre in London for a month and at BAC for three weeks. They also toured London schools (with an award from the Network for Social Change) for a further three weeks.

The play won a Glasgow Herald Angel at the Edinburgh Fringe, was part of the Time Out Critics Choice festival, was nominated as Best Young People's Show at the TMA awards and also for Race in the Media Award as a result of its broadcast on the World Service in June 2002.

In 2002, UK Arts International produced the play and toured it nationally with a new cast; Jenny Platt as Margate Hannah and Erin Brodie as Kosovan Hanna.

In 2003 and 2004, UK Arts International sent the play on two further extensive national tours with Louise Fitzgerald as Margate Hannah and Beth Cooper as Kosovan Hanna.

During this period the play also toured India (2003)), The Philippines (2004) and Malaysia (2005) for the British Council.

Hannah and Hanna has been translated and performed in Hebrew, Swedish and French (published in Editions La Fontaine, Lille, November 2004), and will be staged in Portuguese in 2005 and in Italian and in Dutch in 2006.

The play was revived for its third season at Theatre de Poche in Brussels in January 2005. A French tour is planned in spring 2005.

Hannah and Hanna is the first production of *Company of Angels* (www.companyofangels.co.uk) and was made possible by a Making Art Matter award from Arts Council (South East) and further grants from the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation, Lloyds TSB and Awards For All. The play was a co-production with Channel Theatre Company.

ACT I

SCENE 1

Margate. Summer 1999

The floor of the stage is painted to represent the wooden planking of a seaside pier. US *is a picture signifying Margate, displayed in such a way that other pictures can be easily substituted for it as the play proceeds. Below the picture is a narrow ledge at sitting height. There are two wooden boxes on stage, each about the size of an average suitcase; when the play begins these are side by side* US, *forming a platform. An operational karaoke machine with the name Hannah on it in large capitals stands on the platform. To either side of the stage are two screens, behind which are the props that Hannah and Hanna bring on to the stage, each of them having their own nominated screen and not using the other. Across the front of the stage (and up the sides if a thrust stage is being used) are pier railings; two identical baseball caps hang on these*

The Lights come up

Hannah and Hanna enter from opposite sides of the stage. Hannah is English, brassily made up, with her hair up; Hanna, Kosovan, is plainly dressed and wears no make-up. Each has photographs that they show the audience in turn during the following

Hannah That's Margate from my window.
Hanna That's Pristina, from the window of my old house.
Pristina is the capital city of Kosovo.
Hannah That's me on the beach.
You can't see me because it's packed.
Hanna That's me in a truck on its way from Kosovo to Dover.
You can't see me because I am hiding in the truck.
Hannah That's the block of flats I live in with my nan.
Hanna That's the window of the room which I share with my mother and my brother in the Hotel Bellevue in Margate.
Hannah That's my brother Joe.
He's twenty-two and already a policeman.
Ugly, ain't he?

Hanna This is my mother.
She sits all day looking at the sea from our window.
Hannah And that's my bloke; everyone calls him Bullfrog —
Well, Bull to his face.
Hanna And this is my brother Albin.
He walks around all day with the other young Kosovan guys.
They have nothing to do.
Handsome, isn't he?
Hannah My name is Hannah.
I'm sixteen.
I've lived in Margate all my life.
Margate — what a town!
I hate it!
Hanna My name is Hanna.
I'm sixteen.
I've lived in Margate for three days.
Margate — what a town!
I love it!
Hannah Summer in Margate.
July was crap.
August is scorching hot.
Hanna This is my new home.
I fear nothing.
Hannah The beaches are full of bodies.
So are the hotels, four or five to a room.
Hanna Only thing I fear is leaving Margate.
Going home.
Hannah But it's not like the old days.
The people on the beaches ain't the same as the people in the hotels.
Hanna Three months of hiding in the mountains.
Three days in a lorry to England.
It is so nice to sleep in a bed.
Hannah Bullfrog says "It's a bloody invasion,
Kosovo arrived here in the night!"
That pretty much sums up the feeling locally.
Hanna My family lost everything.
Except our freedom.
When we arrived in Dover I kissed the ground.
Free.
At last.

Hannah sets up the karaoke machine during the following

Hanna moves away — either staying on stage or moving down into the audience

Hannah Picture this:
I'm down on the seafront
With Bull and all his mates,
Doing what I do best
On a hot summer night.

SCENE 2

The Lights change to a setting evoking the seafront by night

With some ad-lib patter Hannah introduces "I Should Be So Lucky" by Kylie Minogue. She switches on the machine and sings the song to a backing tape. All the style and gesture is precisely reproduced. Hannah ad-libs so the audience sees she is performing for an onstage "audience" with whom she interacts either to insult (in reaction to their taunts) or flirt or show off

Hanna moves towards Hannah, watching her performance. Hannah spots Hanna and continues to sing. Then she stops singing, with the tape still playing and herself still moving to the music

Hannah Are you another one of them?

Hanna is blank

Thought you were somehow, something in the air ... (*She sniffs*)
What can it be?
It's a sort of foreign smell — maybe it ain't you.
It must be the scum that comes in with the tide at night.
(*She sings again, then breaks off*)
You still standing there?
Where you from then?
Outer Mongolia?

Hanna is blank

Timbukbloodytoo?

Hanna is blank

(*Switching off the tape*) Don't tell me. I spy with my little eye someone beginning with "K".

Hannah reacts as if she has got a laugh from the "audience" for this. Hanna is still blank

K-K-K-Kosovo … ?

Hanna looks down as if ashamed

Haven't you got a tongue in your head?

Hannah takes in her friends laughing at Hanna. Hanna is silent

Well, come on then Kosovan Spice, say something or die …

Hanna is silent. Hannah walks over to her and puts the microphone to Hanna's mouth

OK, what's your name?

Hanna My name is Hanna.

Hannah (*to Bull and her mates and the audience*) That ain't her real name.
They're all bloody liars.
Don't you know that much?
Yeah, it's so funny …
Oh, you can all sod off.

Hannah goes behind her screen with a clatter, taking her karaoke machine with her and leaving her friends behind

Hanna My real name is Xhevahinja (*Jerve-a-heera*)
But no-one can pronounce it here.
My middle name is Hanna,
So here in Margate my mother named me again.
Hanna — because of all our sorrow,
And because it would help me to make friends in England.
I didn't mean to take her name.

Scene 3

The Lights change to a different outdoor setting

Hannah comes out from behind her screen

Hannah Cliftonville is a mile up from Margate.
It's all posh hotels and lawns
Looking over the sea.
There's a bowling green there

Where Bull and I always go
When it's hot and it's dark.
But I just wasn't in the mood …
I was bloody furious, wouldn't you be?
It's *my* name and I ain't sharing it with an asylum-seeker!
Suddenly Bull's off on one ——

(*As Bull*) Bloody Kosovans.
Come over to Dover.
Nick yer house, your car, your girlfriend,
Load their trolleys up for nothing
And get a hundred pound a week —
For what? To have a lovely seaside holiday — for a year!
We should be so lucky.
That Kosovitch!
I'd tell her straight —
Go back home —
'N' give her a slap next time.

(*As Hannah*) That's my boy!
I'm the only Hannah round here aren't I?
(*She reacts as if Bull is walking towards her*)
Come here, Bull. Where would I be without you?

Hannah returns behind her screen

Hanna I go home and I am upset because the English don't like me.
Mother is crying in our room.
The sun is shining and she's crying.
My brother won't stay in our room.
He does not like her crying.
He goes out on the street all the day.
He walks in a gang to be safe.
Kosovan gang — English gang— very bad.
I don't like this English girl
But I like how she sings.
(*Pause*)
I sing too.
I know all the songs as well as her.
Everyone in Pristina knows English music.
I like Britney Spears, All Saints, Westlife, Celine Dion, Steps.

Hanna sings "Tragedy" by Steps for a full minute, voice and gesture perfect, with no accompaniment

Some people here are stupid.
They don't like us here but they don't know us;
But Joe the policeman who protects our hotel,
He is smiling and makes jokes.
He makes us feel safe.
I am going to make the shopping
In Aldi's.

Hanna goes behind her screen

Hannah comes out from behind her screen wearing an Aldi's overall. She sets up the counter at Aldi's supermarket by moving the two boxes and turning them on to their ends. She stands behind the counter; till operations etc. are mimed

The Lights change to an indoor setting

Hannah Aldi's: it's where I work on Saturday and Thursday nights.
Everyone goes there.
It's the cheapest shop in Margate.
Last Thursday, I'm standing here behind the counter,
There's a massive queue —
It's one of our busiest nights.

Hanna comes out from behind her screen wearing a cheap anorak and carrying a supermarket basket and shopping voucher. She stands as if queuing

And guess who is holding everyone up?
(*To Hanna*) Got an Aldi's card?

Hanna No.

Hannah Cashback?

Hanna No. (*She holds out the voucher*)

Hannah (*peering at Hanna's basket*) You can only spend ten pounds with one of these you know.
You can't buy the whole shop.

Hanna I have vouchers for myself, my brother and my mother.
That's thirty pounds.

Hannah Your mother and brother here are they?

Hanna No, they are at home.

Hannah Where's that, then?

Hanna Here, in Margate. I live here, you know.

Hannah I thought your home was in Kosovo.
Margate's my home, not yours.

You people just don't seem to realize that,
However many times you're told it,
Do you?

Hanna I came here to buy food, not listen again to you.
Please stop your talking.

Hannah One voucher buys ten pounds of shopping,
No change.
One person one voucher per week.
You'll have to put it back
Or bring the rest of the family in.
Call them on your mobile.

Hanna I have not got a mobile.

Hannah You've all got mobiles.

Hanna I have no phone, I have no pounds.
I take the bread, the butter, the jam, the apples, the oranges, the coffee, the sugar, the oil, the ham, the shampoo — seven pounds and five p; the banana, the washing powder, the aspirin, the Coke — nine pounds and fifty-seven p.

Hannah No change.

Hanna The baked beans.

Hannah Nine pounds and eighty p,
Get some matches and start a fire.

Hanna You have the money,
Why don't you set fire to yourself?

Hannah and Hanna walk DS *and face the audience. They are both very angry*

She has no right to talk to me like that.

Hannah You'd think she owned the bloody place the way she carries on.

Hanna A lady in the queue said at least I stood up for myself.

Hannah Next time I won't give her the chance.

They angrily knock over the boxes and exit

Scene 4

The Lights change to a setting evoking the seafront by night

Hannah comes on with her karaoke machine and sets it up. She then repeats exactly the ad-lib patter she used to introduce the Kylie Minogue song in Scene 2 and sings "Baby One More Time" by Britney Spears with the karaoke machine to the same crowd that she did Kylie for

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