The Train Driver

by Athol Fugard

A Samuel French Acting Edition



SAMUEL FRENCH

FOUNDED 1830

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New York Premiere originally produced by
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The following credit shall appear on the first page of the title page of programs for all productions:

***The Train Driver* received its World Premiere at**
The Fugard Theatre in Cape Town, SA in March 2010,
Eric Abraham, Producer, Mark Dornford-May, Artistic Director

The U.S. premiere of *The Train Driver* was produced at
The Fountain Theatre, Los Angeles,
directed by Stephen Sachs, Co-Artistic Director
Glossary by Marianne McDonald

THE TRAIN DRIVER had its world premeire at the Fugard Theatre in Cape Town, South Africa in March, 2010. The performance was directed by Athol Fugard, with sets by Saul Radomsky, lighting by Mannie Manim, and musical direction by Mandisi Dyantyis. The production stage manager was Marissa Steenkamp. The cast was as follows:

ROELF. . . . . Sean Taylor
SIMON. . . . . Owen L. Sejake

THE TRAIN DRIVER received its U.S. premiere at The Fountain Theatre in Los Angeles, opening on October 16, 2010, presented by Simon Levy and Deborah Lawlor, with set design by Jeff McLaughlin, lighting design by Ken Booth, sound design by David B. Marling, costume design by Dana Rebecca Woods, props design by Shannon Dedman, production stage management by Elna Kordijan, technical direction by Scott Tuomey, and dialect coaching by JB Blanc. The director was Stephen Sachs. The cast was as follows:

ROELF. . . . . Morlan Higgins
SIMON. . . . . Adolphus Ward

CHARACTERS

ROELF (RUDOLF) VISAGIE – Train driver in his late thirties.

SIMON (ANDILE) HANABE – an old African man. A gravedigger.

For Pumla Lolwana and her three children –
Lindani, Andile and Sesanda – who died on the
railway tracks between Philippi and Nyanga on
The Cape Flats on Friday, December 8th 2000.

PROLOGUE

*(***SIMON** *is bareheaded and we can see a lot of grey hair. He holds a little woolen cap in one hand as he talks directly to the audience.)*

SIMON. My name is Simon Hanabe, I am the one who puts the nameless ones in the grave. This is how it happened. When I first see the white man…he is walking among the *amangcwaba* where the ones with names is sleeping. It is the first time I see that white man. Sometimes he goes down on the ground and I think he is reading the names but then he stands up and walks some more…and looking, looking. All the time he is looking at the *ingcwaba*. So I say to myself: Simon, what is this man doing here among our sleeping people? Who is he looking for? Then he sees me watching him and he comes to me and starts talking but that time I didn't know what he was saying – his words were all mixed up like he was drunk. So he gets very cross with me when I shake my head and tell him I don't know what he is saying. So he leaves me and walks around some more. Then I see he gets tired and I feel sorry for him so I go to him and tell him that there is no white people sleeping there where he is looking in Shukuma. Only black people. And he says no, he isn't looking for a white people. He is looking for a black one without a name. So I show him where they are sleeping, the ones without names. There are many *amangcwaba* here and he asks me do I know who they are and I tell him no, I know who they are because these are the ones without names. And I ask him who he is looking for and he tells me it is *umfazi*…

a woman…a young woman with a baby on her back. I ask him if the baby is also dead and he says yes the baby is also dead.

(Segue into…)

Scene One

(The graveyard of Shukuma, a squatter camp on the outskirts of Port Elizabeth.)

(It is a rocky weed-choked stretch of veld.)

(The graves are simple mounds of soil packed down with stones. To one side are a few identifying the person buried with a simple name-board or a wooden cross – all weather-beaten. Most of the space however is taken up by nameless graves. Most of these have a piece of discarded junk on them: a rusty motorcar hubcap, an empty plastic bottle etc. The wind has blown away a lot of the soil of some of them, which as a result now rise only a few inches above the ground. On one side there is a straggling wire fence and on the other a typical squatter camp shack. It is an image of desolate finality.)

(Standing among the graves and looking around helplessly is an exhausted and distressed **ROELF VISAGIE**. *It has obviously been a long and hot day – his shirt is unbuttoned and hanging out of his trousers and he is wiping a sweaty neck and chest with a handkerchief.)*

(Watching him at a distance and leaning on a spade is **SIMON HANABE.)**

(The time is late afternoon. In the course of the scene the light fades into twilight.)

ROELF. *(to* **SIMON***)* Mr. Mdoda the undertaker remembers her. About four weeks ago. He said he brought her to you to bury.

SIMON. *(now going up to* **ROELF***)* Then she is here. Because this is where they are, the ones without names. When Mr. Mdoda bring me the next one, I dig the hole here.

(He indicates a specific spot for the next grave.)

ROELF. *(looking around and shaking his head in mixture of despair and disbelief)* Fucking hell! What a miserable bloody ending to your life's story. I wouldn't even bury my dog like this, man!

(goes to one grave and picks up an old motorcar hubcap)

And all this rubbish on the graves? What the hell is the idea? Hey? Get to heaven faster with a Jetta hubcap? Look at them all. Who the hell puts all this junk on the graves?

SIMON. Me.

ROELF. You? *(walking among at the graves and looking at the various items* **SIMON** *has placed on them)* You put these here?

SIMON. *Ewe.* There is no flowers in Shukuma.

ROELF. I see! So that is what it's supposed to be…respect for the dead! Then why not just a simple cross, man? All you need is two little sticks like that one over there… and a piece of string…and then tie them together.

(crosses his two forefingers and holds them up for **SIMON** *to see)*

Remember Jesus? You people are also supposed to believe in God and Jesus, isn't that so?

SIMON. *(shaking his head)* Is no good to make cross. People they come and steal it to make fire to keep warm and cook food.

ROELF. So now there is also no sticks in Shukuma…only rubbish!

(A helpless gesture as he slumps to the ground, resting his back against a fence post.)

No…I give up. S'trues God…I've had it. This is it. Where the hell do I go from here. *Ja!* Hell! That is where she deserves to be. I mean…Jesus…I spent nearly the whole fucking day walking that Swartkops bush trying to find the *pondok* where she lived or somebody that knew her.

I walked that bush three times – one time with a black policeman from the Motherwell Police station and two times by myself. From one miserable bloody *pondok* to another. And every time I asked them: "Is anybody here missing a woman and a baby." Sometimes they would ask: "What did she look like?"…and I would tell them: She was a young woman with a red *doek* on her head, and a old grey blanket that was holding a baby on her back. I know that description off by heart because that is what I saw. Then of course they would just shake their heads and sometimes I could see they wasn't even listening to me. A couple of times they hated me very much and then it was *Suga wena* or *Voetsek Witman* which was okay because I wanted to say, "And you fuck off as well,"…and what's more I did. One guy was drunk and asked me if I wanted to fuck a black woman and said he would get me one. It's pathetic man! Those people live like animals. No toilets so their places was always stinking of shit – if you will excuse the language – the children crawling around in the dirt with no clothes on. I told one women to wipe her baby's nose because he was eating his own snot. What made it worse is that I got so *deurmekaar* on those footpaths I would end up at the same *pondok* two or three times and start asking my questions until they would say, "Why is the Baas asking us again." It was too much for me, man. So then it's back to the police station, who send me to the morgue, and then the old chap there says it's Mr. Mdoda, the undertaker, I must speak to because he always buries the ones without names, and finally Mr. Mdoda sends me here. Here! Look at it.

(He looks around, then gets up and makes one more limp attempt to find the grave of the woman he is looking for.)

And you sure you don't know anyone who is buried here?

SIMON. I tell you, whiteman: This is the place for the ones without names.

ROELF. What about this one. A man or woman? You know…*amadoda*…*abafazi*.

SIMON. *(shocked)* What you ask, whiteman! I don't open the bag and look. I dig and put them in. It is hard work now. I must dig deep because the dogs come. When I first come here to Shukuma there was no dogs in the bush. Now there is many and they are hungry. They come at night and try to dig them up.

(He picks up a stone on one of the graves.)

I put stones now on the graves to throw at them.

(He moves slowly among the graves shoveling a little sand back onto the ones that are on the point of disappearing.)

And then there is also the wind. When it is strong it blows the sand away. Too much wind! Sometimes it blows one days, two days, three days, four days and Simon must sit there in his shack all the time and wait. I can't dig because the sand is getting in my eyes. So why you want this woman with the red *doek?* Did she work for you in the house?

ROELF. No. *(slumps down on the ground with his back to the fence post)*

SIMON. Did she do the washing in the backyard?

ROELF. No.

SIMON. Did she steal from you?

ROELF. NO!

SIMON. Then when you find her *ingcwaba* what you do? You want to dig her up?

ROELF. *(now extremely exasperated by* **SIMON***'s persistent questions)* I want to find her because…okay…you want to know why? Then I'll tell you… *(He can no longer restrain himself from telling the truth.)* Right now my good friend…the way I feel right now is that if you can show me her grave I will stand there, take a nice deep breath and then I will swear at her until I am blue in the fucking face!

SIMON. *(shocked)* Curse her?

ROELF. *Ja.* I want to swear at her until she knows she's a piece of black shit.

SIMON. Dead…no name…and you want to swear at her?

ROELF. *(with vicious deliberation) Ja.* Give me her name… or show me her grave…and I will do it. *S'trues* God. In both official languages because I am fully bilingual. And don't think I am just talking about "Go to hell," and "Your mother's cunt," because I can do a hell of a lot better than that. I'll do it so that her ghost will hear me. I'll tell her how she has fucked up my life…the selfish black bitch…that I am sitting here with my arse in the dirt because thanks to her I am losing everything…my home, my family, my job…my bloody mind! *Ja!* Another fucking day like this one and I won't know who I am anymore or what the fuck I am doing! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Help me!

*(***ROELF** *cannot contain the emotion that has been building up in him. Now at last it is released in stifled tears and sobs that shake his body.* **SIMON** *is very disturbed by the other man's behaviour and presence. He tries to return to his attempts at tidying up the graves while at the same time looking around nervously and registering the onset of twilight.)*

SIMON. *(after a long pause …)* Whiteman! You can't sit here. Just now it is getting dark and then this place is dangerous. If the *Amagintsa* find you they will take out their knives. You don't belong here. You must go.

ROELF. *Ama* who?

SIMON. *Amagintsa.* The gangs…the young boys. The *Tsotsis.* They won't like you.

ROELF. *(sarcastically)* Like you do, hey! So what you waiting for? Go call them.

SIMON. Be careful. Don't make jokes, whiteman. You must go.

ROELF. Go where? There's nowhere to go from here. This is it. All passengers off please! End of the fucking line. *(pointing to the graves)* Look at them, for God's sake.

SIMON. They are sleeping now…and *wena*, you are awake. Go to your home!

ROELF. Home? Don't you understand anything. I've crashed! I was on the rails, I was going forward, everything up to schedule…until it all crashed. Thanks to that woman with the red *doek* I don't know if I've got a home anymore. I don't know if I've got a family anymore, or a job or…*ja* … a life. You said it: This is the place for the ones without names…and I think I'm one of them now. Roelf Visagie? Who the hell is he? You got your spade so dig another grave, man.

*(***SIMON** *makes one more useless attempt to tidy the graves, but he is now even more disturbed by the other man's presence. He looks around apprehensively again before finally going up to* **ROELF**.*)*

SIMON. When the *Amagintsa* is finished with you they will come and do me. *Ja!* That is how it is with them. I am too old to run away. They will catch me. "Why you let this white man sit here in our world, Simon? Why you let him come and sit here where our people is sleeping."…and then they take out their knives again. *(very firmly)* Is not good! You come with me now.

*(***ROELF** *doesn't move. After looking around again* **SIMON** *prods him with his spade and speaks firmly.)*

Hey! I say come with me! Wake up, whiteman. *Kom man!*

*(***ROELF** *gets slowly to his feet and follows* **SIMON.***)*

Scene Two

(Simon's shack. The two men. **SIMON** *lights a candle.)*

SIMON. *(pointing to a corner)* You sit there tonight. Tomorrow you go somewhere else.

*(***ROELF** *sits down in the corner indicated.)*

*(***SIMON** *goes to what is obviously his bed – a jumble of old blankets on the opposite side – and settles down, resting his back against the wall of the shack.)*

(He studies **ROELF.***)*

(The candle is on a wooden box next to his bed.)

ROELF. *(looking around)* So this is your place…your *ikhaya*… your home.

SIMON. *Ewe.*

ROELF. *Ja,* well…as they say: No place like it, hey? That's for fucking sure. *(shaking his head in disbelief)* If Lorraine – my wife – could see me now! She'd make me soak in Clorox for a week before she let me get into bed with her. God alone knows what she'd do with you, my friend. Because she's very fussy you know…specially about bad smells and things like that. Hygiene! That's her hobby. Give her a can of Lysol to spray around… you know… *(He demonstrates Lorraine spraying the air with an aerosol.)* Ssssss… Sssss… and she's a happy woman. Between me and you though I think she carries it a little bit too far. Like this dead woman I'm looking for…

SIMON. Red *Doek.*

ROELF. That's the one. Well, you see, after the accident I was thinking about her one night…well to tell you the truth I was thinking about her every bloody night… you know how it is man, when you switch off the light and you lie there in the dark and your brain just won't stop thinking…so I'm lying there in the bed in the

dark waiting for the pills to put me to sleep…and I was talking to myself, but softly because I didn't want to wake up Lorraine…so I was talking to myself about all that happened and how it happened and about Red *Doek* because it just doesn't make sense you see, when the next thing I know is that Lorraine is sitting up in bed and shouting, "Will you please shut up about that bitch! This house already stinks from her! I can smell her everywhere!"

How do you like that, hey? She's never seen her but now she can suddenly smell her everywhere. *Ja*, home sweet home. I know all about it.

SIMON. So why you want to swear at this woman with the red *doek*? What she do to you?

ROELF. I don't know anymore. I don't know if she did it to me or if I did it to her. All I know is she is dead and I am well and truly fucked-up.

SIMON. What you do to her?

ROELF. That's a nice simple question. I think I killed her!

SIMON. *Yo!*

ROELF. Yep. Simple as that. Everybody of course says I didn't…the other drivers, the Systems Manager sitting behind his desk, my wife…*Ja!* You want to hear Lorraine on that one! *(imitating his wife's voice)* "She was drunk, Roofie darling. Booze and pot. It's the same story with all of them."

Thank you very much, Lorrie darling, but I know how I feel inside. It was me she was looking at when she went down. It is her face that haunts me every bloody night in my dreams!

SIMON. How you kill her?

ROELF. Can you read?

*(***ROELF** *takes a very tired newspaper clipping out of a pocket and offers it to* **SIMON.***)*

SIMON. *(shaking his head and waving away the offered clipping)* No read.