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PICTURE OURSELVES IN LATVIA

BY **ROSS HOWARD**



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Picture Ourselves in Latvia was first produced by New Light Theater Project at Access Theater, New York City on July 10 2014. Directed by Sarah Norris.

The cast was as follows:

DR RUPERT – Christian Ryan

NURSE WHITEHALL – Amy Lee Pearsall

OLIVER – Gregory James Cohan

MARTIN – Christopher Daftsios

DUNCAN – Andy Nogasky

ANNA – Dana Benningfield

Set Design	Oliver Sohngen
Costume Design	Samantha Lind
Lighting Design	Michael O'Connor
Sound Design Production	Kyle C. Norris
Stage Management	Juni Li
Associate Director	Abby Wylan
Assistant Director/ASM	Nick Walsh
ASM/Technical Assistant	Scott Pulvirent
Casting Director	Alex Lawrence
Producer	Michael Aguirre

For Jerry L. Crawford

Acknowledgements : Hannah Pierce, Euan Borland,
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and all at Finborough Theatre, Adam Thorpe, Mary Doherty,
Mark Donald, Gemma Lawrence, Nathan Nolan,
Aled Pedrick and Matthew Raymond.

Picture Ourselves in Latvia

by Ross Howard

CHARACTERS

DR. RUPERT – A psychiatrist. Very English.

NURSE WHITEHALL – A nurse.

OLIVER – An orderly.

MARTIN – A patient.

DUNCAN – A patient.

ANNA – A patient. Very Latvian.

PLACE & NOTES

With the exception of Scene 6, the play takes place on a psychiatric ward in England.

A dash (–) after a word denotes an interruption or an inability to complete the word or sentence. An ellipsis (...) denotes a trailing off.

A loose translation of the Latvian folk song *ES IZJĀJU PRŪŠU ZEMI* as sung in Scene 4 is as follows :

“I RODE OFF TO THE LAND OF PRUSSIANS
WHILE PLAYING THE ZITHER.
PRUSSIAN GIRLS WANTED
TO HAVE ME AS THEIR OWN SIR
I WON’T STAY WITH THE PRUSSIAN GIRLS
I’VE GOT MYSELF ONE IN KURZEME
IN KURZEME THERE ALREADY IS ONE FOR MYSELF
A YOUNG MAIDEN IN MY YARD
MAY GOD BE WITH YOU, PRUSSIAN GIRLS.
I AM GOING BACK TO KURZEME
BACK TO KURZEME. BACK TO MY OWN GIRL.”

Scene One

OLIVER, MARTIN *and ANNA are doing press ups.*

OLIVER Forty eight... forty nine... fifty.

OLIVER *jumps to his feet. He is full of energy.* **MARTIN**
and ANNA look exhausted and get to their feet in a
weary manner.

Not so easy, is it? Now imagine doing nine hundred of those in four minutes. That's what we had to do out there. On the deck.

MARTIN Wow, nine hundred?

OLIVER Nine hundred, Martin. The big nine-oh-oh. Two fat ladies.

ANNA Two fat ladies?

OLIVER Tell her, Martin.

MARTIN It's a bingo reference, Anna. We say it after every number, don't we, Oliver?

OLIVER We do indeed, Martini Extra Dry. It's a British tradition.

ANNA Two fat ladies, eighty-eight.

MARTIN Yes, that's it. Sort of.

OLIVER Yeah, other way round but you're half way there.
Now imagine doing all nine hundred when you're feeling sea sick.

MARTIN I couldn't. Could you, Anna? I couldn't.

OLIVER You probably couldn't, Martin. But see, that's where I come in, see. And the people like me. Because me and the rest of our boys could; and that's how we do what we do and how we did what we did for you. You get me?

MARTIN Er, I think so.

OLIVER I mean some people call us heroes but I wouldn't know about that. Well, I do know about that but I wouldn't like to say.

Brief silence.

So... ?

MARTIN What?

OLIVER I mean, well like, do you think I'm a, that I'm well, like a hero, Martin?

MARTIN Oh I wouldn't like to say really.

OLIVER Don't be shy now.

No response.

Anna?

ANNA *shrugs her shoulders.*

You're too shy with your feelings you two. That's your trouble. Probably why you're in here. Mad with shyness. Hey, you want to hear a story? They say it's the greatest story ever told.

MARTIN Is this about Jesus?

OLIVER No. Well, that probably is the greatest story ever told. (*A beat*) No, actually I reckon this one and that one are neck and neck.

MARTIN Six of one and half a dozen of the other.

OLIVER Exactly. Too close to call. But it's a fucking belter, it's about the day I sank The Belgrano.

DUNCAN *enters.*

MARTIN Duncan!

OLIVER Dunconi.

DUNCAN Martin. (*To OLIVER*) Bullshitting again? You big bullshitter.

MARTIN Oliver was going to tell us a story. Weren't you, Oliver?

DUNCAN I bet he was.

MARTIN The greatest story ever told. Joint first place.

DUNCAN The biggest bullshit ever told and runaway winner more like.

OLIVER Eh. Now, now. Don't get cheeky.

Silence.

DUNCAN I actually wanted to ask Anna something. Anna, do you have a second?

ANNA looks over to DUNCAN but does not move.

OLIVER Fire away, Dunc.

DUNCAN (*To ANNA*) In private.

ANNA does not move.

OLIVER No secrets in here, big boy.

DUNCAN Anna?

OLIVER She doesn't want to go with you. Say what you've got to say here. We won't laugh will we, Martin?

MARTIN I don't know what he's going to say yet. He might say something funny.

OLIVER He might.

MARTIN Duncan can make me laugh, can't you Duncan?

DUNCAN Yes, Martin.

Silence.

Anna. I was thinking about watching a film in the common area. Would you like to watch it with me?

OLIVER He's asking you out on a date, Anna.

DUNCAN NO IT'S NOT!

OLIVER *laughs.*

ANNA Can Martin come to? Do you want to watch a film, Martin?

DUNCAN Well, I was just asking you.

MARTIN I want to hear the story.

ANNA I want to hear the story too.

OLIVER It's better than a film.

Silence.

MARTIN Stay and listen to the story, Duncan. Then maybe you and Anna can watch the film.

ANNA I don't want to if you can't.

MARTIN If you don't want me to watch the film with you, Duncan, I can go to my room and go to sleep or do some other stuff.

Pause.

DUNCAN Go on then. What's this story?

OLIVER Oh, I don't think this story is for you, Dunconi.

DUNCAN Why's that?

MARTIN He hates it when you call him 'Dunconi', doesn't he, Anna?

ANNA *nods.*

DUNCAN So why's it not a story for me?

OLIVER Has water in it.

DUNCAN So?

OLIVER Don't like water, do you? You're scared of water aren't you, Duncan?

DUNCAN I'm not scared of water.

OLIVER Just the thought of it makes you lose your shit.

DUNCAN No (*A beat*) just don't like showers. Being splashed.

OLIVER And that's why you stink. Anna doesn't want to sit next to that. She wouldn't be able to taste her popcorn.

DUNCAN I don't have popcorn. And I don't stink. I have baths.

OLIVER Shallow baths. Like a baby.

DUNCAN They're still baths. Gets the job done.

OLIVER Pussy.

DR. RUPERT *enters.*

DR. RUPERT Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman.

OLIVER Doctor.

DR. RUPERT (*To OLIVER*) Everything hunky dory?

OLIVER Sound as a pound.

DR. RUPERT Good. Now are we all looking forward to Nurse Whitehall coming back?

No response.

Well of course, none of you have ever met her so that's understandable. I think you'll like her. She's very nice. Good.

MARTIN She's had a little baby.

DR. RUPERT That's right, Martin.

MARTIN Will she bring it with her, do you think, Doctor?
So we can all have a look?

DR. RUPERT (*Laughs*) Oh well, I'm not sure about that.

MARTIN They do that, don't they? Mothers. At the workplace.

DR. RUPERT Probably. Yes, I think they do. But we are a psychiatric ward. It just depends.

MARTIN I bet it has baths like you, Duncan. Shallow baths so it doesn't drown.

DR. RUPERT Well, you all sound in good spirits. Just wanted to pop my head in and say *bonjour*.

MARTIN Oliver is going to tell us a story.

DR. RUPERT How exciting. Another time for me, I'm afraid. Anna, Duncan. (*A beat*) *Arrivederci*.

DR. RUPERT *exits*.

MARTIN That's Italian for goodbye.

Silence.

OLIVER (*To DUNCAN*) Go and watch television.

DUNCAN No, I want to stay.

Silence.

OLIVER Okay, so we're in the South Atlantic. Stormy weather, choppy waters. Sharks, killer whales, dolphins, sea dragons, you name it. They have everything down there. Jumping up, rocking the ship, we're shaking

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