SAMUEL FRENCH SAMPLE PERUSAL

This sample is an *excerpt* from a Samuel French title.

This sample is for perusal only and may not be used for performance purposes.

You may not download, print, or distribute this excerpt.

We highly recommend purchasing a copy of the title before considering for performance.

For more information about licensing or about purchasing a play or musical, please visit our website.

www.samuelfrench.com
www.samuelfrench.co.uk

SF PERUSALS

elegies

for angels, punks and raging queens

by

Bill Russell

Music by

Janet Hood

A Samuel French Acting Edition

New York Hollywood London Toronto

SAMUELFRENCH.COM

ISBN 978-0-573-69569-8 Printed in U.S.A. #7096

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of ELEGIES FOR ANGELS, PUNKS AND RAGING QUEENS *must* give credit to the Author and Composer of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing, or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The name of the Author and Composer *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type. Billing *must* be substantially as follows:

(NAME OF PRODUCER)
PRESENTS

ELEGIES FOR ANGELS, PUNKS AND RAGING QUEENS

Book and Lyrics by
Bill Russell

Music by
Janet Hood

*Because **Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens** evolved over several productions over a period of years, there is not an original cast which reflects the piece as it appears here. Characters were added, cut, changed and renamed. Included here are casts of the four productions which most contributed to the ultimate shape of the piece – two in New York and two in London.*

The first full staging of ***Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens*** was presented by T.W.E.E.D. *(Theater Works Emerging / Experimental Directions)* as part of its Sixth Annual New Works Festival, in association with Justin Ross. It opened on May 18, 1989 at the Ohio Theater in New York. The cast was as follows:

SINGER #1 ..... Linda Langford
CHRISTOPHER ..... Kenny Morris
BILLY ..... Russell Garrett
TROY ..... Randl Ask
SEAN ..... Frank Jump
MITCH ..... Mark Fotopoulos
JOSH ..... Justin Ross
DOUG ..... André Morgan
SINGER #2 ..... James Rocco
SINGER #3 ..... Lewis Cason
TIM ..... Michael Kelly Boone
PACO ..... Sixto Ramos
FRANCIS ..... James Van Treuren
SALLY ..... Suzanne Rand
RAY ..... Bill Damaschke
DWIGHT ..... John Augustine
LAMAR ..... Stanley Wayne Mathis
JOE ..... Don Laventhall
MICHAEL ..... Laurent Giroux
ROSCOE ..... Jay Rogers
HELEN ..... Vera Johnson
PAUL ..... Lance McGinnis
NAT ..... George Cambus

CONSUELA ..... Ajisha Terry
NORMAN ..... Phillip Officer
BERTHA ..... Miriam Stovall
CHUCK ..... Bradley Jones
HOWARD ..... John-Charles Kelly
OLIVER ..... Randell Fryman
ANDY ..... John Salvatore
NICK ..... Tom McBride
GRANT ..... Peter Bartlett
MILES ..... David van Leesten

A subsequent production at the RAPP Arts Center in New York opened on February 21, 1990 with the following cast changes and additions:

SINGER #2 ..... David Ross
SINGER #3 ..... Stanley Wayne Mathis
(until Lewis Cason returned)
CHRISTOPHER ..... Philip Bryce
TROY ..... Terry Robison
MIKE ..... Kenny Morris
JOSH ..... John Salvatore
DOUG ..... Edwin Louis Battle
TIM ..... Michael Kane
(second half of run)
FRANCIS ..... Richard Conrad
TRACEY ..... Lisa DeSimone
SEAN ..... Randell Fryman
LAMAR ..... Andre Montgomery
(first half of run)
CONSUELA ..... Natasha Hinds
NANCY ..... Carol A. Honda
NICK ..... John Schiappa
ANDY ..... Jorge Luis Abreu

The first London fringe production was presented by The King's Head Theatre and Giacomo Capizzano, opening November 10, 1992 with the following cast:

MELISSA *(Singer One)* ..... Maria Ventura
CHRISTOPHER ..... Jonathan Arun
BILLY ..... Jonathan Brent
PATRICK ..... George Heslin
MITCH ..... Len Trusty
JOSH ..... Aidan Dooley
DOUG *(Singer Two)* ..... Omar Okai
BRIAN *(Singer Three)* ..... Kevin Power
JUDITH *(Singer Four)* ..... Sylvia Mason-James
TIM ..... James Payten
TRACEY ..... Amanda Mealing
DWIGHT ..... James Lance
FRANCIS ..... Patrick Duggan
RAY ..... Mark Powley
PACO ..... Carl Pizzie
SALLY ..... Sharon Schaffer
ORVILLE ..... Michael Bell
NICK ..... Stuart Bennett
ROSCOE ..... Lily Savage
Regina Fong
HELEN ..... Mary Chester
LAMAR ..... Don Gilét
NANCY ..... Polly Moore
KHADIJA ..... Irma Endrojono
Miquita Oliver
PAUL ..... Brendan Coyle
NAT ..... Simon Clark
RAFAELA ..... Myriam Cyr
JOANNE ..... Race Davies
TODD ..... Joe Hutton
BERTHA ..... Andrea Oliver
BUD ..... William Vanderpuye
JOE ..... Richard Pocock
GRANT ..... Peter Birrel
MILES ..... Ruairi Conaghan

The London West End production was presented by Giacomo Capizzano, Ltd. at the Criterion Theater, opening June 28, 1993 with the following cast:

Singers:

JUDITH ..... Kim Criswell
DOUG ..... Kwame Kwei-Armah
ANGELA ..... Miguel Brown
BRIAN ..... Simon Green

Actors:

CHRISTOPHER / PATRICK ..... James Dreyfus
BILLY / DWIGHT ..... Neil Roberts
MITCH / MILES ..... Ade Sapara
JOSH / JOE ..... Simon Fanshawe
Alternate – *Derek Howard*
TRACEY / CHARLOTTE ..... Sarah Burghard
FRANCIS / GRANT ..... Graham Hoadly
LAMAR / WALTER ..... Don Gilét
RAY / BUD ..... Sean Mathias
TIM ..... Aiden Waters
SALLY / CLAUDIA ..... Trudie Styler
ORVILLE / NAT ..... Mac Andrews
NICK / PAUL ..... Stuart Bennett
ROSCOE ..... Regina Fong
HELEN / NANCY ..... Elizabeth Kelly
RAFAELA / JOANNE ..... Race Davies
KHADIJA ..... Gwyneth Jones
Irma Endrojono
BERTHA ..... Nicola Blackman

Singer alternates ..... Maria Ventura
David Arneil

Vocal Arrangements and Orchestrations by James Raitt.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many wonderful people have contributed to the evolution of ***Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens*** and it is impossible to acknowledge all of them. But a few must be mentioned:

Rita Mayer, whose editing of the poems was invaluable, Justin Ross, who nurtured the project in its early stages, Kevin Maloney and T.W.E.E.D. *(Theater Works Emerging / Experimental Directions)* who presented the first two New York runs with Justin, Bruce Bossard, who raised much of the funding for the early productions and, with Merry Morse, is a bedrock of the authors' lives, Ken Page, who premiered the piece in L.A., Mark Sendroff and Susan Steiger, who negotiated contracts over the years, James Raitt, who did the musical arrangements and orchestrations and produced the London cast c.d., Kevin Garrity, a constant and generous supporter and the extraordinary Giacomo Capizzano, who was determined to take ***Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens*** to London and ultimately the West End and did.

In addition, many fine performers, designers, stage crews, financial angels and friends have given their talents, skills, time, generosity and support to this project and we are most grateful.

And sadly, I think it important to note that many participants in the project's different incarnations are no longer with us due to AIDS, or are continuing to live with it daily. We especially want to extend our gratitude to them for reminding us why the piece was conceived and continues to be pertinent.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens is intended to reflect the broad spectrum of people AIDS has both infected and affected. A correlative objective is to provide a vehicle which can involve a large part of the community in a theatrical response to the AIDS crisis.

Having directed ***Elegies*** ... several times in various circumstances, I have a few thoughts I'd like to share with other directors. The structure of the piece is not linear in the traditional sense but what is presented here has been worked out over many productions in front of many audiences. The rhythm, variety and flow of the running order have proven to be very effective and should not be altered.

Though it is possible for roles to be doubled (or more), I vastly prefer that the show be done with one actor in each role – making for a cast of 36! The piece has been presented with that size ensemble at the King's Head Theatre in London on a stage measuring 10 feet by 22 feet, so I'm convinced it can be done anywhere. An all-star benefit in L.A. used more than the four singers indicated here, which required less rehearsal time per performer and brought the company to 41. Though at first glance working with a cast of this size may seem daunting, the piece can be put together with minimal rehearsal time (excepting the director). I've often scheduled two half-hour rehearsals per actor (the singers require more) and then several group put-togethers and run-throughs. Because ***Elegies*** ... is often used as a fund or awareness-raising vehicle, participants (with the blessing of their respective unions) have frequently contributed their talents for little compensation.

Many of the characters are specific types, ages or ethnicities, but others could be played by wildly divergent types (some could even be either men or women). I've tried to give a sense of that in the following character descriptions. When casting this piece, I would encourage potential directors to reach beyond the talent pools with whom they normally work. If you have not worked with or don't know many older actors, children or members of different ethnic groups, here's a chance to broaden your contacts and make the production a true community experience.

I've found accumulation a most effective device for staging – starting with an empty stage, each actor remaining once having done the monologue. Since the songs are voiced in present tense and therefore reflect those still living with loss and AIDS' other ramifications, it seems fitting that the singers come and go.

A brisk pace is most beneficial. Eliminating lag time between monologues can help tremendously. ***Elegies*** ... is written in verse but that doesn't mean the actors should punch the rhymes. Better if they tell the stories as naturally as possible and let the verse take care of itself. Ad libbing seems not only unnecessary, but detrimental. Rhythm is everything in this piece and when extra syllables, creative comments and lengthy pauses are added, the results are less than satisfying (especially to the ear).

Speaking of the ear – a note about the music. This is not a typical musical-comedy score and the singers should be comfortable with pop styles. Janet and I lean toward hearing the songs performed on microphones, even in a small space. The style of the music lends itself to that, and the presentational nature of the piece does not make hand-held microphones seem out of place (though body mikes may make staging easier).

A word about the ending. I think it very important that the audience is briefly reminded of each character they've met. Giving each actor a moment to toss confetti in character and then to join in singing the final song allows for that and adds to the celebratory quality we'd like at the end.

My major advice, though, is to have fun with this, which is why I stress casting actors who can play comedy or find the humor in many of the monologues. Janet and I didn't intend for ***Elegies*** ... to be a dirge – rather a celebration of some very important lives. Oddly enough, something which came from such sadness has given us our most enjoyable experiences in the theater. I always tell the cast that it's fairly easy to make an audience cry with this subject matter – the challenge is to make them laugh. I also urge actors not to cry on stage – it undercuts that possibility for the audience.

We hope performers and audiences will come together to laugh, reflect on an incredible amount of loss and move to the beat.

bill russell
March, 1996

CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS

I would stress the importance of casting actors from ethnic minorities whenever possible.

The SINGERS are wide open but a few considerations follow. All should be comfortable performing in pop styles.

JUDITH:

Soprano. BUD's sister, so those roles need to be coordinated.

DOUG:

Baritone. Has traditionally been black.

BRIAN:

Tenor. Should be believable as RAY's friend.

ANGELA:

Alto. CLAUDIA's secretary. Has often been black.

PATRICK:

A man in his 30s or 40s (old enough to have achieved success as a designer). Important that the actor can find the humor in the monologue.

BILLY:

Young (early 20s) a typical all-American mid-Western boy.

MITCH:

Any type, traditionally has been costumed in leather.

JOSH:

A clown and ring-leader of the group of friends (the first four characters plus DOUG).

TIM OR TINA:

Male or female teenager who can find the laughs in this. The younger and more energetic the better.

TRACEY:

Young, gorgeous, sexy and spoiled. She should find the laughs and stay away from pathos.

CHARLOTTE:

A young, tough drug-abuser.

FRANCIS:

A gentleman of a certain age. Outrageous.

RAY:

A regular guy, party animal, athletic. His friendship with BRIAN should be easily accepted.

PACO:

An hispanic teenager, the younger the better.

SALLY:

Many possibilities as long as she's not too old to have recently given birth.

ORVILLE:

Middle-age, middle-class, "an ordinary Joe."

NICK:

Drop-dead gorgeous, traditionally costumed in a towel, so a great body is a plus. The audience should be seduced by his charm and beauty.

CHRISTOPHER OR CHRISTINE:

Any type male or female who can play comedy.

DWIGHT:

A typical, young, Broadway-chorus-boy type, Southern accent can work.

REBECCA:

Mid-Western, typical housewife.

CLAUDIA:

A high-power corporate executive. A contrast to her secretary, ANGELA, is helpful. British accent can work.

ROSCOE:

A big old drag queen.

HELEN:

A typical grandmother.

WALTER:

Old enough to attend a high school reunion, different somehow (ethnic? heavy? off-beat?) so we can see why he was something of an outcast.

LAMAR:

A black, street-hangin', story-tellin' drug abuser. Essential that the actor find the humor here.

RAFAELA:

A very young hispanic mother.

NANCY:

Wide open as to age and type, but a no-nonsense kind of woman.

KHADIJA:

Experience has proven that small, eight-year-old girls work best. Younger is heart-breaking but often includes projection problems. An ethnic minority is highly preferable and a boy (KWAME) is possible if all else fails.

PAUL:

A strong, leading man type with a great speaking voice. Old enough to have served in Vietnam (though he could have died from AIDS in the early 80s. He should be at least in his 30s).

NAT:

A fire and brimstone orator, traditionally costumed as a priest or minister. Should be at least 50 or preferably even older.

JOANNE:

Best comedienne available. Could be male (JOEL).

BERTHA:

Preferably black, middle-aged.

BUD:

Believable as JUDITH's brother.

JOE:

A comedian of any type or age, as long as he can get the laughs.

GRACE:

A professor type, strong dramatic actor. Often played by a man (GRANT), but now prefer a woman.

MILES:

Should be believable as DOUG's lover. Often cast with a black actor.

ELEGIES FOR ANGELS, PUNKS AND RAGING QUEENS

(JUDITH enters and sits or stands near the orchestra.)

"ANGELS, PUNKS AND RAGING QUEENS"

JUDITH:
WE PLAYED THIS DIVE IN THE VILLAGE
SOMEWHERE ON THE EDGE
DURING THE BREAKS I'D HANG OUTSIDE
HAVE A SMOKE SITTING ON A LEDGE
I'D WATCH THE PARADE AS IT PASSED BY
THE JUNKIES AND HOT-TO-TROT TEENS
AND IT FELT SO RIGHT
TO BE SHARING THE NIGHT
WITH ANGELS, PUNKS AND RAGING QUEENS

WE PLAYED THAT GIG FOR A LONG TIME
GOT TO KNOW SOME FOLKS
GAVE THEM SOME CHANGE OR TOOK THEIR CARDS
HEARD THEIR SCHEMES
LISTENED TO THEIR JOKES
SOMETIMES THEY WOULD STOP AND HEAR MY SONG
EN ROUTE TO THEIR FABULOUS SCENES
AND I STILL GET LAUGHS
FROM OLD PHOTOGRAPHS
WITH ANGELS, PUNKS AND RAGING QUEENS

WELL I LOVED THAT TIME IN THE VILLAGE
THOUGH I STILL DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS
MATRONS AND WHORES
INTELLECTUAL BORES
ANGELS, PUNKS AND RAGING QUEENS

I PASS THAT PLACE LIKE A PHANTOM
EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED
THAT LOUSY DIVE IS A SLEEK BOUTIQUE
PRIORITIES REARRANGED
I LONG FOR THE MIX OF THE BAD OLD DAYS
THE BALLGOWNS AND TORN-UP JEANS
AND I SING THIS SONG
FOR THE SOULS WHO'VE GONE
SWEET ANGELS, PUNKS AND RAGING QUEENS

(Lights down on JUDITH, who stays in place. PATRICK enters observing JUDITH and indicating her when HE mentions his friends.)

PATRICK: *(Part I)*
when i died
my friends
threw a fabulous party
exactly as i planned

with a chunk of my estate
in hand
they rented
my favorite restaurant
drank champagne and margaritas
laughed at memories
as tears and beers were spilt
unveiled my panel
for the quilt
then went dancing
and tossed my ashes
like confetti
on that ballroom floor
where we had played
and played before

oh we did know how to party
we heard the sound
of sirens in the city
calling us to join the dance
and met
in heady days of liberation
from our fears
a late-night celebration
of how right
it felt to say
i am here
and i am gay

yes
we sometimes went too far
too many drugs
too many men
but when that world
began to die
i marveled at the way
those movers of the stylish scenes
the stunning hunks
the disco queens
became the leaders of the fight
ever constant flames of light
in death's long and lonely night

the focus of my younger days
was largely split between
dad's body shop
and sewing on mom's old machine
me
the track and field star
working on my souped-up car
then whipping up fantastic frocks
oh not for me
or anyone
i always kept them under locks

but later on
those skills
of sewing and design
led to a modicum of fame
and many women wore my name

when i found out
my life would end from aids
i began to sew
the panel
which would show my name
upon this quilt

as i survey
all the thousands honored here
i wish that i
could throw them all a party
to celebrate
the lives they had

do not be sad
you who are the living
still have love to give
and troubled hearts to fill
with hope

we the dead
are free
of fear and strife
and of the mysteries of life

do not berate yourselves
for what you wish you'd said
before it was too late
honor us
with song and dance
and don't forget
to celebrate

(HE showers the audience with confetti and begins to dance as loud disco music blasts the theater. With a whoop, MITCH, JOSH and DOUG enter from all sides and dance with PATRICK in a tight group. From the opposite side of the stage, BILLY enters and surveys the dancing MEN. BILLY twirls, the disco music stops and the DANCERS freeze as HE addresses the audience.)

BILLY:

as soon as i could
i fled
the wretched town
in north dakota
its conventionalities
and cow-poke mentalities

i ran straight
to new york city
caught a cab
to christopher street
tucked my suitcase
at my feet
ordered something
a bit too sweet
and stayed 'til closing

yuuummm
glorious virility
overwhelming my eyes
like the disco sound
assaulting my ears
and the small town fears
floated right away
as i sat
day after day
watching the parade

life
life all around me
here in the village
no more dakota drudgery
instead
the neon-pulsed
manhattan-driven beat
of hunky boys
and men
complete with minds
set to compete
for the best this world
gives in one small place

these were the winners
of the race

so i got a job
and settled in
a studio
so long and thin
the sofa-bed
scraped the wall
when open
which was all the time
for who knew when
some stranger
dark
sublime
would stumble in
and leave me lying
with a grin
across my face
that even work
could not erase

but then
the plague descended
and my days of bliss
were ended
gradually at first
then growing
'til there seemed
no chance
of slowing
its advance

death
all around me
here in the village
the boys
the men
never to be seen again

and i among them
watching still
even here upon the hill
of the town
which i despised
ever glad
that i devised
some means of sweet escape

for though i was returned
by death
at least i set out after life
and found some pleasure
where i fled

MITCH:
i didn't do nothin'
that plenty of others
weren't doin' all along
so why was i
the one to die
by being hit
with this aids shit

god damn
it pissed me off
everything
from the doctors
to the cough
that wouldn't quit
gave me a pain
in my left tit

and just as a point
of reference
fuck the term
sexual preference
i didn't choose
to be this way
never wanted
to be gay
did not request
the "gift" of birth
and didn't want
my time on earth
to be cut short

forgive me
if i'm not a sport
about all this
but now that i
have kicked the bucket
all i have to say is
fuck it

(JOSH walks Downstage, crouches, pantomimes picking up something, then turns to the OTHERS.)

JOSH: Hey, here's a good one!

(DOUG, BILLY, MITCH and PATRICK crowd around, transfixed by what JOSH is showing them.)

JOSH: *(Continued)* Wait! Look at it wet!

(HE pantomimes putting the object in his mouth and then holds it up to ecstatic screams from the OTHERS.)

JOSH: *(Continued)*
tripping
on the beach
in provincetown[1]
the day was gray
the light diffused
whatever substance
we had used
made the hues
of tiny rocks
along the shore
glow like gems
in harry's store

and there we were
billy, patrick
mitch and doug and me
loony as five guys can be
jumping up in ecstasy
over each discovery
of another stone
whose brilliant colors
we would find alone
then share with all the others

[1] *Directors outside of the U.S. may substitute "mykonos".*

(JOSH finds one and runs back to the others.)

JOSH: *(Continued)* Look!

(Again the OTHERS crowd around.)

DOUG, BILLY, MITCH, PATRICK: *(In unison)*
Ooooooooooooooooh! Aaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhh!

JOSH:
someone had the revelation
that the unique configuration
of design
was more remarkable
when the tiny stones were wet
so we put them in our mouths
this sufficed more easily
than always crossing to the sea
oh we were loony as could be

"demosthenes"
i'd yell
"demosthenes
take those marbles
out of your mouth
and eat your dinner"

(The FOUR scream and laugh, hanging on each other. THEY form a huddle and freeze.)

JOSH: *(Continued)*
and everyone would scream
and carry on

how we'd laugh
at times like those
how sad those days
came to a close

first mitch got sick

(MITCH disengages from the GROUP and turns his back.)

JOSH: *(Continued)*
we mourned him so
then the rest
began to go

(BILLY and PATRICK turn their backs.)

JOSH: *(Continued)*
grief subsiding
not one bit
before another friend
was hit

when i succumbed
i fought the dark
which numbed my mind
by focusing
on when we shined
there on that beach

and my last request to doug
besides a final
healthy hug

(DOUG crosses, but it is JOSH who hugs him. Then DOUG crosses to one side.)

JOSH: *(Continued)*
was that he take
my charred remains
and toss them
off that strip of shore
to blend with pebbles
evermore

i was ugly
as could get
and thought
i would look better
wet

(Music in as JOSH crosses Upstage and DOUG watches him go.)

"I'M HOLDING ON TO YOU"

DOUG:
OH THOSE DAYS WHEN LIFE WAS ONE BIG PARTY
FLOATING ON BALLOONS OF FANTASY
WHEN I'D FEEL SO HIGH
I COULD FLY RIGHT THROUGH THE BLUE
YOUR STANDARD REPLY
TO MY WELL-REHEARSED CUE
WAS "I'M HOLDING ON TO YOU"

(JUDITH enters.)

DOUG & JUDITH:
YES I'M HOLDING ON
CAN'T BELIEVE THAT YOU'RE GONE
I DON'T LONG TO PURSUE SOMEONE NEW
CAUSE I'M HOLDING ON TO YOU

(ANGELA enters.)

ANGELA:
STILL DON'T KNOW JUST WHEN THE PARTY ENDED
HAVEN'T STARTED LEARNING TO LET GO
I CAN'T SAY GOOD-BYE
AND CAN'T CRY FOR THOSE WE KNEW
I CAN'T EVEN TRY
TO DO MORE THAN REVIEW

(BRIAN enters and joins in.)

SINGERS:
SO I'M HOLDING ON TO YOU

YES I'M HOLDING ON
WON'T ADMIT TO WHAT'S GONE
AND DON'T LONG FOR NEW DREAMS TO PURSUE
CAUSE I'M HOLDING ON TO YOU

BRIAN:
FEELS LIKE WE'RE BALLOONING
THROUGH THE STORM CLOUDS
SOMEONE LET US LOOSE AND OFF WE FLEW
NO INSTRUCTIONS, NO CREW
NOT A CLUE WHAT TO DO
SO I'M HOLDING ON TO YOU

SINGERS:
YES I'M HOLDING ON
WON'T ADMIT TO WHAT'S GONE
AND DON'T LONG FOR NEW DREAMS TO PURSUE
CAUSE I'M HOLDING ON TO YOU

YES, I'M HOLDING
HOLDING ON
I'M HOLDING ON TO YOU
YES, I'M HOLDING
HOLDING ON
I'M HOLDING ON TO YOU

TIM:
i shouldn't be here
they got it wrong
no aids
not me
and that is why
i don't belong

i did get sick
and checked into the hospital
but quick

do i, doctor?
is it aids?
his studied silence
spoke in spades

so i took an easy exit
from my window
eight floors high
at least i died
on my first try

afterwards
the test came back
and showed
an overwhelming lack
of antibodies

i didn't have it
i was wrong
and now i'm where
i don't belong

this quilt is fine
for those who did
but not this kid

TRACEY:
i always got
what i went after
so when i heard
the music of his laughter
across that bar
where every self-appointed star
thought it wasn't cool to smile
i clicked my heels
across the tile
to his side
and said
"i have something to confide
i am completely over black apparel
it signifies a total lack
of individuality
i like your smile
and you're wearing red"

i knew he'd fall
into my bed

he did
one more slightly spoiled kid
who'd had it all
and wanted more
spinning my revolving door

except
i didn't send him back
to that world
all dressed in black
i kept him there
with me in bed
and bought him more clothes
colored red

then one fun night
of take-out
and videos
he bursts into tears

"i'm bi"
he chokes
"and i am sick"

and real quick
i jump in
"you're not sick
you're hot
no wonder guys want
what you've got"

"not this"
he cried
"not aids"

and when he died
he left me these
some crimson shirts
and his disease

i never thought
i'd end up dead
because i loved
a boy in red

CHARLOTTE:
god i loved getting high
any old drug
i was happy to try
and new medications
or combinations

telling a junkie
she could die
from sharing needles
is like telling the government
there's no more money

honey
it just don't register

so it was absolutely no surprise
when aids hit me
right between the eyes
that brought me down
so i searched the town
for a connection
to go the opposite direction

crack is cheap
but oooo it works
the drawback is
it comes with jerks attached
but having sex with twenty guys
can buy you several lovely highs

i ended on the street
"please, sir, spare some change
so i can eat"
and when a sympathetic passerby
dropped some money in my cup
i returned to shooting up

one day
this woman
looked right at me
said, "you don't look well"
my response,
"good enough to live in hell"

she took me to an office
filled with other chicks
putting in their do-good licks
by trying to get me help

oh i was sick
all sorts of female infections
which various inspections
showed were caused by aids
"sorry
those don't qualify
for government assistance"

even if i wanted
to get off drugs
which i certainly did not
"no room in rehab"
so if you're going
to buy the farm
what's one more needle
in your arm

that woman
and her liberated friends
did all they could
for those like me

they were cool
and they did try
but they weren't as good
as getting high

(ALL on stage exuberantly break into the last bars of a piano bar standard. FRANCIS enters and sings louder and longer than anyone.)

FRANCIS:
i'd lived enough
thank you very much
and was just as happy
it was over
though i wish the ending
wasn't quite so messy
and i'd died in something
a bit more dressy

still
i'm not sure
it was any worse
than living out
the age-old curse
of fading into
a tired queen
with a fallen ass
watching seasons
slowly pass
in some piano bar
wishing
i was young and firm
filling out
like a pachyderm

i was always first to scoff
at couples made
of two old men
i'd rather be a lonely hen
chasing after chicks

(HE approaches TIM who turns to him.)

who sometimes have the yearn
to learn
some antiquated tricks

(TIM laughs and turns away.)

FRANCIS: *(Continued)*
the end
was not a pretty scene
though all-in-all
perhaps less mean
than years of me
growing old
and crotchety
always bitching
giving guff

oh, no, my dears
i'd lived enough

(RAY enters.)

RAY:
my sister
went through men
faster than i did

ALL ON STAGE: Ha!

RAY:
well almost

some of hers were losers
some were boozers
some were cute
and one of them
was a real beaut

(BRIAN enters.)

RAY: *(Continued)*
that was brian
husband number three
or four
i don't remember anymore
he lasted longer
than the rest
but not forever
it was best

somehow
he became my friend
and we survived
the end
of their relationship

we shared the common bond
of loving sand and water
framed by a frond or two of palm
hot bright sun
and the balm
of island breezes
we dreamed of moving
to the tropics
of leaving
the aroma
there in soggy old tacoma

don't misconstrue
he was hetero
through and through
but we could do
most anything together
and have a real good time

(RAY and BRIAN spontaneously break into pantomimed business which illustrates their friendship – for instance, basketball, baseball or heavy-metal "air" guitar licks.)

RAY: *(Continued)*
when i confessed
how messed up
i was inside
he took action
called in sick
said, "pick your island"
flew us to a beach
like that
where we just sat
and watched the tide
come in and out
discussed what life
was all about

and after we returned
he learned all sorts of ways
to help
how to change
my soaking sheets
without disturbing
all the tubes
how to give
the medications
how to fight
dull administrations
of hospitals and agencies
when to bark
and when to bite
and when to hold
my hand so tight
i'd see beyond
my fading sight

(BRIAN puts his hand on RAY's.)

of all the friends
i ever had
brian was the straightest
and certainly
the greatest

(Music in as BRIAN breaks from RAY, who lowers his head.)

"AND THE RAIN KEEPS FALLING DOWN"

BRIAN:
YES, MY FRIEND
IT'S RAINING AGAIN TODAY
I NEVER UNDERSTOOD
WHY YOU CHOSE TO STAY
IN A CLIMATE
THAT'S MOSTLY WET AND GRAY
WHEN WHAT YOU LOVED
WAS A SUN SO HOT
IT TURNED THE GREEN GRASS BROWN
AND THE RAIN KEEPS FALLING DOWN

I THOUGHT THE SKY
WOULD CRY ITSELF DRY
BY THIS TIME
THOUGHT THAT I
WOULD SEE THE SUN BY NOW
ONE MORE TEAR
MIGHT WASH AWAY
THIS GOD-FORSAKEN TOWN
BUT THE RAIN KEEPS FALLING DOWN

WHO AM I
A REGULAR KING OF GUY
I NEVER LET THE CLOUDS
CLUTTER UP MY SKY
LEARNED TO PARTY
BUT NEVER LEARNED TO CRY
AND EVEN NOW
MY TEARS WON'T MOVE
THEY'RE PAINTED ON A CLOWN
AND THE RAIN KEEPS FALLIN' DOWN

WISH THAT I COULD LET GO
LIKE THE STORM CLOUDS
BURST THROUGH THE DAM
LIKE A FLOOD BREAKING DOWN A WALL
HEAVEN SEEMS TO WEEP WITH FAR LESS REASON
BUT I CAN'T CRY AT ALL

(Very slowly, EVERYONE Onstage crosses into a tunnel of light and takes a seat.)

BRIAN: *(Continued)*
THOUGHT THE SKY
WOULD CRY ITSELF DRY
BY THIS TIME
THOUGHT THAT I
WOULD SEE THE SUN BY NOW
ONE MORE TEAR
MIGHT WASH AWAY
THIS GOD-FORSAKEN TOWN
BUT THE RAIN KEEPS FALLING DOWN

(RAY is the last to move to his spot. BRIAN takes one last look.)

BRIAN: *(Continued)*
YES, THE RAIN KEEPS FALLING DOWN

(RAY sits on the last notes of music.)

(PACO enters.)

PACO:
mamacita
mamacita soldano
mi madre of the heart
del corazon

FINISH READING THIS SCRIPT

Visit our website to purchase the full script or to explore other titles.

www.samuelfrench.com
www.samuelfrench.co.uk

To stay up to date on all that we are doing, follow us on social media:

*Titles for licensing are subject to availability depending on your territory.

SF PERUSALS