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Acting Edition

Wild Horses

by Allison Gregory

SAMUEL FRENCH

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www.concordtheatricals.com
www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION INQUIRIES

United States and Canada
info@concordtheatricals.com
1-866-979-0447

United Kingdom and Europe
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WILD HORSES made its world premiere through the National New Play Network (NNPN) at the following theaters: Contemporary American Theatre Festival (CATF), Shepherdstown WVA; New Jersey Repertory Theatre, Long Branch, NJ; Vortex Theatre, Austin, TX; CenterStage Theatre @JCC, Rochester, NY; Subsequent productions include Intiman Theatre in Seattle, WA; Merrimack Repertory Theatre in Lowell, MA; Williamston Theatre in Williamston, MI; Phoenix Theatre in Indianapolis, IN. For the Contemporary American Theatre Festival (CATF) production, the Director was Courtney Sale, Assistant Director Joshua Midgett, Set & Costume Designer Jesse Dreikosen, Lighting Designer John Ambrosone, Sound Designer David Remedios, Stage Manager Samantha Cotton. The cast was as follows:

THE WOMAN . . . . . Kate Udall

CHARACTERS

THE WOMAN – 40–60, the mother of teens.

SETTING

The location of this play is a place where people gather: a casual, communal hub. It might be open-mic night at a bar, it could be an open-air food court, or a community center rec-room – or the very theatre we're in.

It was once, in the way back, a Tastee Freeze. Somehow we should know/sense this.

TIME

Tonight.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Music should be considered a driving force in this play, use it aggressively to elevate, impel, power the story forward.

The song titles I've listed are what I listened to when I was writing; if you choose to use these songs for your production it is the responsibility of the theatre to obtain specific rights to the music and lyrics (see music note on p. iii. Otherwise, use these listed songs as a map to the ambition of each scene, for emotional or tonal shifts in the play, and as a jumping-off-point for original sound design. The music isn't simply incidental; it isn't merely transitional; it should feel essential, and it should be used avidly and generously.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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MUSIC

#1: “Horse With No Name” – America
#2: “Living In The Past” – Jethro Tull
#3: “Reelin’ In The Years” – Steely Dan
#4: “The Cisco Kid” – War
#5: “I Gotcha” – Joe Tex
#6: “Barracuda” – Heart
#7: “Rock On” – David Essex
#8: “The Rapper” – The Jaggerz
#9: “Me and Mrs. Jones” – Billy Paul
#10:“Don’t Let The Sun Go Down On Me” – Elton John
#11: “Smoke On The Water” – Deep Purple
#12: “Superstition” – Stevie Wonder
#13: “Brand New Key” – Melanie
#14: “Black Dog” – Led Zepplin
#15: “Midnight At The Oasis” – Maria Muldaur
#16: “Dancing In The Moonlight” – King Harvest
#17: “Shambala” – Three-Dog Night
#18: “Horse With No Name” – America
#19: “Magic Man” – Heart
#20: “Radar Love” – Golden Earring
#21: “Brand New Key” – Melanie
#22: “Immigrant Song” – Led Zeppelin
#23: “Let’s Get It On” – Marvin Gaye
#24: “La Grange” – ZZ Top
#25: “Horse With No Name” – America
#26: “Wild Horses” – The Rolling Stones

"Against all this, Youth,
Flaming like the wild roses,
Flashing like a star out of the twilight;
Its fierce necessity,
Its sharp desire,
Singing and singing."

Prairie Spring by Willa Cather

(The ambient buzz of conversation, a communal space, inside or out, people gathered for a good time.)

*(***THE WOMAN** *enters or is already there. She talks to us, picking up a story she lived to tell. All the characters have names and they are all voiced by* **THE WOMAN***.)*

THE WOMAN. The worst part of The Belt was the waiting
You had to go into their bedroom
your own parents' bedroom
which was awkward
because it's a mysterious room that you really don't want to think too much about
Get The Belt out of Dad's belt drawer
Lay it on the bed
Pull your pants down
And "think about what you did."
Only just then I couldn't get past thinking about how much it was going to hurt.
What made it even worse
I kept thinking about Garff Garrett on the waterbed with his pants around his ankles and his droopy checkered boxers and Zabby holding a knife
But you don't know that part.

I would *never* tell my kids this. They think I'm at my book club. I'm not in a book club.

(She hears music [1]. The song.)

Everyday that song played on the radio. That summer there was a contest and I was going to win it. Whoever came up with the best name for the horse that didn't have a name would win, no lie, *a horse.*

You had to send a name in on a postcard, one name per postcard.
I stamped and pre-addressed ninety postcards.
I was going to win that horse.

We knew all the words by heart.
Every day that summer I sent in a new name for the horse with no name.
Nobody even knows what the words were supposed to mean
But still we sang the song
It was our anthem – if we'd known what an anthem was
It's the thing we sang before doing it
It being the thing we wouldn't be doing if the three of us weren't together.
Zabby, and Skinny Lynny, and me
Vying testing erupting
Egging each other on to greatness
To infamy
To getting our asses kicked.
Like sneaking into Zabby's parents' pub
They actually had a pub inside their house
Making drinks out of whatever's open
Didn't matter
Jack Daniels, Strawberry Hill, Peppermint Schnapps, Gin
Doesn't matter because we're thirteen
we hate the taste of all that shit
But we're thirteen
Yeah!

(Music [2].)

So we pour it all together
The brown and the red and the clear stuff that makes my nose sting and my eyes water – plus some orange juice, for body

We pour it all into an empty tennis ball can
And we drink
Holding our noses
It's awful, godawful
But taste is not the point
Taste is the last thing we care about.

I was a good girl
An outstanding student
the perfect child of miserable parents
Corruption fodder
What class do you have right now Zabby says

THE GIRL. Um French.

ZABBY. You're going to be late to your French class.

I'm never late, I say.

ZABBY. Today you're going to be late.

Everybody knew her
Abbey Zilker – Zabby. She was newly notorious
A fist fight with Tonya Yonkers on the bus had gotten her suspended for three days.
Even though she had a red bald patch where Tonya yanked a bunch of her dirty blonde hair out it was pretty much agreed that Zabby won.
Tonya crying
Nobody really concerned because she's a bossy cry baby.
Now Zabby is back at school
Talking to me
I'm terrified and sort of honored.

ZABBY. You better hurry. You're going to be late to French.

THE GIRL. Can you, um, would you please give me back my French book?

(The sound of the late bell.)

ZABBY. Uh oh. Was that the *bell*?

THE GIRL. Oh my god give me my book!

ZABBY. I guess you're late, huh? What are you going to do?

THE GIRL. You're late too, idiot!

ZABBY. So what?

THE GIRL. So we're going to get in trouble! If you get three tardies you get a detention and one more after that you get suspended and after three suspensions you get *expelled*.

ZABBY. How many tardies have you had Frenchy?

None, I say.

ZABBY. I've had *five*.

THE GIRL. Five?

ZABBY. *This week*.

THE GIRL. You could get *expelled*.

ZABBY. *(Sarcastic.) Oh no really?*

THE GIRL. Just shut up and give me my French book please.

ZABBY. Oh look, it's the Assistant Principal.

THE GIRL. Don't let him see us!

ZABBY. How's it going Mr. Miser?

THE GIRL. *(Fierce whisper.)* Oh my god shut up shut up shut up.

ZABBY. Hey sorry Mr. Miser, I meant to bring you raisins today but my rabbit died so no more raisins.

We spent the rest of the afternoon sitting in the Assistant Principal's office.

(Music [3].)

Zabby was everything I was afraid to be
Irreverent, outrageous, attractive, funny
She could even dance like she was black.*
That sounds bad.
You have to remember this was a time when all the white people were doing disco and we all looked even whiter.
Zabby was an influence.

*(*If* **THE WOMAN** *is a person of color please use the following dialogue:)*

Zabby was everything I was afraid to be
Irreverent, outrageous, attractive, funny
And she could *dance.*
Zabby was an influence.

SKINNY LYNNY. Hey Zabby, what if your parents find out?

That's Skinny Lynny
We're in Zabby's parents' pub making a carafe of our disgusting magical elixir

ZABBY. They don't care they're at a party.

Skinny Lynny is pouring

THE GIRL. Whoa that's way too much of the brown stuff Lynny.

SKINNY LYNNY. I'll balance it out with more of the clear.

She just kind of fell into my life,
Skinny Lynny
She literally fell off her bike in front of my house.
The thing about Skinny Lynny
She was totally accident prone.
It's notable how many near-death encounters she survived

Some kind of miracle she didn't die sooner
She was just funny that way.

SKINNY LYNNY. Yum, down the hatch!

*(**SKINNY LYNNY** plugs her nose and guzzles, gasps, chokes.)*

THE GIRL. Is it bad?

SKINNY LYNNY. Really bad, have some.

(Music [4].)

Zabby wasn't nearly as bad as her brothers Dean and Don-o.
All things considered she was the responsible one of the litter.
Dean, tall, great-looking
Square-jaw, brooding eyes
Twenty-two or nineteen
I don't know but too old to be a kid
And mean
Pain-seeking mean.

(Music [5].)

One night we hide in the eucalyptus trees bent over the street
Armed with rotten stolen eggs from the Peaker's chicken farm
Go!
Invisible to the unsuspecting car that had the bad fortune to drive under us
Plop!
We expertly drop fetid bombs on windshields and hoods and laugh 'til we wet our pants.

Zabby look who's coming.

Uh oh
Dean's car
His manhood rumbling on the road below us
Mean Dean
We smell glory.

One-two-go go go I shout!
We pelt that macho station wagon with heart-felt
hatred and joy and thirteen-year-old revenge
Bam Bam Bam!

Miscalculation.
It takes him no time to put two and two together

(She makes the sound of **DEAN** *slamming on the brakes.)*

(Music [6].)

Dean backing up like a maniac
That car has never moved so fast
Us screaming, laughing, skittering down the tree
Scattering in every direction.
Dean bolting from the passenger side of his car
because the driver door is busted
Dean chasing down his sister
Dean tackling her to the ground, smashing rotten eggs
in her face and hair
Dean grinding bits of shell hard into her head
Dean grunting
Zabby too tough to cry

ZABBY. Get off me you fat-ass fag!

Me and Skinny Lynny tearing out of there
Skinny Lynny of course tripping on a pothole
Scraping up her chin her knees her elbows
I stoop to help her but Dean is coming
Big mean smile
I didn't do it Dean, Lynny lies
Stop it, don't Dean don't!

Dean not stopping
Crushing egg into Skinny Lynny's head, her face
Her hair a matted mess
Her mouth full of dirt
Dean getting up

Looking for me
But I am hell-bent, tearing through someone's backyard.
Dean yelling

DEAN. I'm watching you, you bitch, you little bitch. I'll teach you to fuck with my car squirt!

He never did catch me that night.
He never did forget.

Saffire
Shiloh
Dark Lady

"I been through the desert on a horse *with* a name?"
It doesn't sound right
But that's how you win the contest

SKINNY LYNNY. What if it's a boy?

Hitchcock
Elton John
Ringo
Bozo.

THE GIRL. Everyone will look for the hidden meaning in the name.

Destiny
Roulette
Fickle Finger of Fate

We were standing in Garff Garrett's driveway
Me, Zabby, Skinny Lynny, Garff Garrett
And some little cousin of his.
No really the cousin wasn't very tall.

Cousin just stood there with his hands in his pockets
He wasn't show-offy like Garff Garret who was full of it.

The only reason we had walked there was because
Garff Garrett
He said he'd gotten a bunch of weed
Hot shot.
He told Zabby he'd give her some if she came over.

Garff Garrett was always making like his family was rich.
Whatever, but he lived in a dirty house at the top of a hill at the end of a winding road.
So we're there and he's talking about nothing
It's obvious he has a hard on for Zabby
Everybody does
Zabby can't stand Garff Garrett
Nobody can
But she's wily.
So we're standing in the driveway not really listening or caring.

GARFF. Zabby are you going to Jeff Cranover's party?

ZABBY. I don't know, maybe, are you?

He invited me says Garff

Who cares, I thought.

GARFF. Did you go to his last one?

ZABBY. I don't remember.

GARFF. I was invited to that one too.

Sure you were, I thought.

GARFF. I was pretty high I can't remember if I saw you there.

And I'm thinking because you weren't there because you weren't invited A-hole.

GARFF. I'm having a big party, like everyone can come you know? I can do anything I want, my parents' don't care. I've just gotta wait 'til they get back.

Your parents are going to be at the party, asks Skinny Lynny.

GARFF. No pinhead, they have to buy the keg.

ZABBY. Where's the pot Garff?

GARFF. Yeah the pot, uh. In my room.

Go and get it Garff says Skinny Lynny.

GARFF. Hey Zabby, ever been on a waterbed?

I think Garff Garrett is a lonely guy.

ZABBY. You have a *waterbed*?

GARFF. Hell yes, California king with a heater. Hot and wet.

Creepy lonely.

GARFF. Come on, I'll show you. What? I'll give you the pot after you look at my waterbed swear to god.

Despite every screaming impulse otherwise we follow Garff Garrett and his "cousin" into his bedroom to look at his waterbed

SKINNY LYNNY. It's Oh-My-God huuuge.

GARFF. See told you, biggest one in the store.

That waterbed was big. At least he didn't lie about that.

GARFF. Come on get on it.

THE GIRL. What's that smell?

Garff Garrett pushes a pile of dirty magazines, french fries, batteries, and a steak knife off the bed.

GARFF. You gotta lay down to get the full experience.

THE GIRL. Whoa. How do you stay on it.

SKINNY LYNNY. It's squishy.

ZABBY. Feels like warm waves.

GARFF. Feels even better with no clothes on.

I'm watching Garff's cousin in case he tries to lock the door. But he's just leaning against the wall, hands in his pockets I'm pretty sure he can't actually do anything else. Why am I paranoid?

GARFF. The best is when you're loaded and naked and you close your eyes. It's like being on a magic carpet in the Bahamas. So what do you say, Zabby?

ZABBY. I say we smoke some.

SKINNY LYNNY. Totally smoke some.

GARFF. No way, my parents.

You said your parents are out of town, I say. You said your parents don't care.

ZABBY. We'll be cool city. Come on Garff, where is it?

SKINNY LYNNY. Where is it Garff?

GARFF. Everyone gets naked first.

Gross no! I say. I'm not getting naked.

GARFF. Shirts off, then.

SKINNY LYNNY. Fuck off Garff.

GARFF. Forget it then, no skin no weed.

We have walked a long way for nothing.
That's when Zabby turns Garff Garret's stereo on.

(Music [7].)

ZABBY. I like to dance before I strip.

Now
Zabby is a really good dancer
But what the hell is she talking about?
She starts to sway and
And something in Garff clicks

Some kind of switch in his pea brain
She is hypnotizing him!
He doesn't say anything, just takes off his shirt
Starts moving his pale chest and arms and hips
Rolling his lax belly
Like if one of those plastic troll-dolls danced underwater.
He is standing up on his waterbed gyrating and undulating with the waves.

(**GARFF GARRETT** *gyrates and undulates.)*

ZABBY. Give us what we came here for. The pot, Garff.

Garff Garrett doesn't hear or doesn't care
He is undoing his belt
He is unzipping his pants
Pulling them down and leaving them around his ankles
Assaulting our eyes with his droopy checkered boxers.
Skinny Lynny looks away.

SKINNY LYNNY. Stop Garff.

Just tell us where the stuff is, I say.

GARFF. Don't tell them Dirk!

That's when Cousin Dirk with his hands in his pockets starts snickering.

ZABBY. You little *shit*. You don't have any!

SKINNY LYNNY. Fucking Garff.

GARFF. Yes I do, I have a whole stash.

ZABBY. You do not, you're a liar.