SCRIPT SAMPLE

This sample is an excerpt of a
Concord Theatricals title.

Samples of Concord Theatricals titles are for perusal and cannot be used for performance or downloaded, printed, and distributed in any way.

concord
theatricals

THE MOSINEE PROJECT

by Counterfactual

SAMUEL FRENCH

Copyright © 2024 by Counterfactual
Artwork design: Guy J Sanders
All Rights Reserved

THE MOSINEE PROJECT is fully protected under the copyright laws of the British Commonwealth, including Canada, the United States of America, and all other countries of the Copyright Union. All rights, including professional and amateur stage productions, recitation, lecturing, public reading, motion picture, radio broadcasting, television, online/digital production, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved.

ISBN 978-0-573-00064-5

concordtheatricals.co.uk
concordtheatricals.com

FOR AMATEUR PRODUCTION ENQUIRIES

United Kingdom and World
excluding North America
licensing@concordtheatricals.co.uk
020-7054-7298

Each title is subject to availability from Concord Theatricals, depending upon country of performance.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *THE MOSINEE PROJECT* is subject to a licensing fee. The purchase, renting, lending or use of this book does not constitute a licence to perform this title(s), which licence must be obtained from the appropriate agent prior to any performance. Performance of this title(s) without a licence is a violation of copyright law and may subject the producer and/or presenter of such performances to penalties. Both amateurs and professionals considering a production are strongly advised to apply to the appropriate agent before starting rehearsals, advertising, or booking a theatre. A licensing fee must be paid whether the title is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged.

This work is published by Samuel French, an imprint of Concord Theatricals Ltd.

To inquire about Professional Rights, contact Concord Theatricals.

No one shall make any changes in this title for the purpose of production. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, scanned, uploaded, or transmitted in any form, by any means, now known or yet to be invented, including mechanical, electronic, digital, photocopying, recording, videotaping, or otherwise, without the prior

written permission of the publisher. No one shall share this title, or part of this title, to any social media or file hosting websites.

The moral right of Counterfactual to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with Section 77 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

USE OF COPYRIGHTED MUSIC

A licence issued by Concord Theatricals to perform this play does not include permission to use the incidental music specified in this publication. In the United Kingdom: Where the place of performance is already licensed by the PERFORMING RIGHT SOCIETY (PRS) a return of the music used must be made to them. If the place of performance is not so licensed then application should be made to PRS for Music (www.prsformusic.com). A separate and additional licence from PHONOGRAPHIC PERFORMANCE LTD (www.ppluk.com) may be needed whenever commercial recordings are used. Outside the United Kingdom: Please contact the appropriate music licensing authority in your territory for the rights to any incidental music.

USE OF COPYRIGHTED THIRD-PARTY MATERIALS

Licensees are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted third-party materials (e.g., artworks, logos) in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original materials that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for clearances of all third-party copyrighted materials, and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play(s) and their licensing agent, Concord Theatricals Ltd., against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of such copyrighted third-party materials by licensees.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

If you have obtained performance rights to this title, please refer to your licensing agreement for important billing and credit requirements.

NOTE

This edition reflects a rehearsal draft of the script and may differ from the final production.

THE MOSINEE PROJECT was first produced by New Diorama Theatre, and premiered at Underbelly at the Edinburgh Fringe on 1 August 2024. The cast and creative team were as follows:

JOHN DECKER/
MAYOR RALPH E KRONENWETTER ..... Jonathan Oldfield
BENJAMIN GITLOW/
FRANCIS SCHWEINLER ..... Martha Watson Allpress
JOSEPH ZACK KORNFEDER ..... Millicent Wong

Writer/Director ..... Nikhil Vyas
Original Co-Creator/Dramaturg ..... Aaron Kilercioglu
Co-Creators and performers ..... Jonathan Oldfield, Martha Watson Allpress, Millicent Wong
Additional Material ..... Martha Watson Allpress, Breffni Holahan, Jessica Layde, Jonathan Oldfield

Set and Costume Designer ..... Grace Venning
Lighting Designer ..... Catja Hamilton
Sound Designer ..... Patch Middleton
Video System Designer ..... Dan Light
Research Consultant ..... Emma Jude Harris
Producer ..... Jessie Anand
Stage Manager ..... Josh Trackman

Supported using public funding by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, with additional support from MGCfutures and the Unity Theatre Trust.







CHARACTERS

Primarily:

JOSEPH ZACK KORNFEDER
BENJAMIN GITLOW
JOHN DECKER
FRANCIS SCHWEINLER
MAYOR RALPH E KRONENWETTER

More variously:
The **TOWNSPEOPLE** of Mosinee, Wisconsin
The **PRESS** of the United States of America
US, here and now

SETTING

Mosinee, Wisconsin, United States of America.
Wherever else we might be.

TIME

Late January–Early May, 1950
Some time after then.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

As a director who is often exasperated by the sight of stage directions, I feel duty bound to relieve any would-be interpreters of this play of any burden in what any of the following should look like. When I made this play, I made a number of decisions in organising people, objects, sounds, space, time, and feelings, that were organic to the specific conditions of the process we found ourselves in. For example, we had three performers, some set design, some lights, and some cameras and videos. Two pieces of music featured prominently – Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto*, as performed by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, and Fleetwood Mac's 'Don't Stop'. I am very happy with the decisions I made in that process of organisation, but by no means expect anyone else to make even remotely similar ones.

If you're reading this, you probably also already know what the business of dots and dashes in a playtext means. All text in *italics* indicates a moment when performers – as themselves, in any number or combination – talk to an audience, in the year of when a performance takes place. All text in *(italics and brackets)* indicates performance that was created live by the company. All spaces between lines indicate rhythm.

The Mosinee Project, at its heart, is a speculation on a real event, real people, real places, real things, and I would offer that you should take up that speculation on your own terms.

Have fun. Good luck.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

They say it takes a village to raise a play – in the ruthlessly denuded landscape of the contemporary arts, this feels truer than ever. *The Mosinee Project* has been a process of intense scrimping and from the first R&D onwards, and there are many hands who helped me with raising.

Thanks to:
Gabi Spiro
Blythe Brett
Beth Drury
Breffni Holahan
Jessica Layde
who all helped me with the first flights.

Stella Green
James Nash
Rohan Perumatantri
Ash Gupta
Emma Clark
Emma Jude Harris
Jaz Woodcock-Stewart
Robin Hellier
for insight, expertise and encouragement.

Brian Logan and the team at CPT
Sheila and the team at Talawa
Rose and the team at Turf Arts
Bec and the team at NDT
Alex and the team at Underbelly
Pierre and the team at Centre 151
Hattie and the team at Siobhan Davies Studios
Daniel and the team at MGCFutures
The Unity Theatre Trust
Arts Council England
Multitude Media
Cup Of Ambition
Guy J Sanders
for space, support, means and materiel.

Martha
Millie
Jon
for soul, imagination and humour.

Grace, Patch, Catja, Dan, Josh
for patience, skill and nerve.

Jessie
for everything.

Aaron
for everything, from the beginning.

Mum and Dad
always.

Dedicated to Emily, my peace.

ACT ONE

DECKER. Well, truth be told, whatever explanation I give you, it'll all seem a little far-fetched now, but…none of you can imagine what that time was like. What we… were facing. We had to act. Had to do something. And it began with me hearing that speech, Joe McCarthy's speech.

What made the most impression on me later, was the piece of paper. How he held it aloft in his hand, like this. It didn't even occur to me that it was a prop. It just seemed to say, this problem is not in your head. It is real. So real you can hold it in your hand.

And the number he gave, 57. It…felt precise. Not a number plucked out of thin air.

He just held this piece of paper in his hand, with those 57 communists on it, and the implication was, he could crush it, whenever he felt like it. And perhaps, crush them, whenever he felt like it.

As I left that speech, the whole journey home my mind was racing. It felt like something was activated in me. I'd known about Commies before this, of course, you know, Alger Hiss, Liz Bentley, the rest of them – and, of course, the Legion, it was all anyone would talk about. But as I was travelling home, I felt like I was seeing everything different. That's the funny thing about a speech like that, what it does to the imagination.

I thought I could see them everywhere. Commies, I mean. Thought I saw one loitering outside the drugstore. Thought I saw one, sweeping the street near my car. Thought I saw one, next to the streetlight by my porch.

DECKER. Got me thinking, that's how you tell a story. Don't give the whole game away. Let the audience imagine. Much more effective.

And that was how it started. Must all seem a little far-fetched now, but…none of you can imagine what that time was like. What we…were facing. We had to act. And at that moment, certainly I didn't think it would end in…anybody dying.

SCHWEINLER. Of course I was enthusiastic! Listen, Mosinee's the most honest, hard-working, god-fearing community in the country. So long as Mosinee's been on the map, there's been a Schweinler there. We helped put it on the map! So when John Decker pitched it one of our state Legion meetings: some kind of…demonstration of life under Commie rule, in a local town, I immediately replied, sign us up! Us, being Mosinee. The most honest, hard-working god-fearing community in the United States. Being as I am the editor of the *Mosinee Times*, I knew my people well. Knew this'd be a…shot in the arm for them. And that I could probably get some sponsorship from Preston's Quality Bakery in the bag too.

So I started to get the ball rolling, discussing it with the Mayor. But next thing I know…

DECKER. An educational experience. That was the plan, at first. For the youngsters, maybe? But pretty soon I realised we needed some expertise. You know, here we were trying to create an educational experience about this problem, but what the heck do I know about being a Red? And I didn't exactly have a rolodex of communists I could call up and ask them, 'what is it you believe in and how do you go about trying to achieve it?'

So I made some enquiries at the Legion, and, within, I don't know, a couple of weeks, he appeared.

*

KORNFEDER. Flyers? Flags? A marching band? I don't see a lot of progress here.

DECKER. From as soon as he arrived, he cut to the chase, no pleasantries. I would discover that was his preferred method of communication. He went straight over to my steno pad and started rifling through, and I tried to explain we'd only really gotten the ball rolling, and that, you know, this was for a local audience, so we had to cater to those…tastes…

KORNFEDER. What do you imagine when I say to you, Communism?

SCHWEINLER. Now, when you serve in the military, as I have, you get used to all manner of Tom, Dick and Harry trying to impress you with some newfangled idea. You get used to dealing with it in an efficient manner. So I told him, well, look, I mean, it's not any damn way I want to live. Told him, I like my liberty, as written in the Constitution, which they don't have. Told him, I like being on the side of progress, which they don't have. And I told him I like the feeling of safety and security, which they don't have. To which, he replied –

KORNFEDER. You feel safe?

SCHWEINLER. Well, yes.

KORNFEDER. Well, then why would you be planning something like this?

SCHWEINLER. I didn't appreciate that.

DECKER. I tried my best to turn the question on him, and to ask him, well, what was his impression of the Commies? Because, after all, he was the expert who'd been sent, so clearly, he should know. To which he only replied –

KORNFEDER. With respect to you both, gentlemen, you seem to be shying away from what is at stake here. Flags and marching bands and singing 'God Bless

America' are all well enough for the annual state fair, but what you're proposing to deal with – Communism – is alarming, and if you want people to learn, you have to alarm them. You don't achieve that with a lecture, or presentation, or pageant. You have to make something that will happen live. To make people feel something. To feel fear. And that is something that can only happen in bodies, in the right time, in the right space, in the right conditions. Have I described it accurately?

DECKER. Yes, sir.

SCHWEINLER. Yes.

KORNFEDER. You are on the cusp of something that could transform the political life of the nation. You have the right time. You have the right space. Now I'm going to help you to create the right conditions.

DECKER. And then he gave us a suggestion for the day this would happen on – 1st May 1950.

SCHWEINLER. I remember coming away from that, thinking, who the hell have I got myself mixed up with? Got in my car, drove to straight to Wausau to find some answers. I went to the *Herald* building, into the back room where they keep their archives, started digging back through the clippings and –

Joseph Zack Kornfeder. There was a file on him.

Moved here from Slovakia in 1915. Joined the Communist Party in 1919, as a garment worker. Started as an organizer in Harlem, then joined the district committee, then became district organiser, then labor unions activities secretary, then joined the top rank of the national committee. Moved to Moscow for three years. Joined the Lenin School. Trained in underground political warfare. Moved to Columbia and Venezuela as part of the Communist International.

And then, in 1934, he just…left. Left the Party. Turned his back on it all. This Kornfeder, he'd been as Red as you get, until one day, he just decided, magically, that he wasn't.

And this was the man we were handing over Mosinee, the most honest, god-fearing town in the USA to?

*

Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us. It's nice to see you all. I'm aware there's quite a lot that's been thrown at you, so I just wanted to check in, explain where I'm at currently.

I think it's probably best to start with…America. In case you didn't guess, that's where all this is happening.

How do you imagine America?

Maybe baseball? Eagles? Apple pies? Stadiums? White picket fences? Those really big houses, which spread out over way wider patches of ground than we get over here? Guns? Racism? Trump?

I find it impossible to imagine America. It feels too vast to pin down. I can't get my head around it. There's just too many things within America to comprehend. All the way back to when we studied it in school, I would be told this thing and that about the place, and I couldn't figure out how to piece it together. I've only really been to New York City, and that pretty much was beyond the limits of my imagination.

And yet I started to think of America, a little bit, like a parent. Or guardian, at least. Do you know what I mean? It's not always a very nice parent. Or a very fair one. But you know how, as a child, when you see your parent is ill, or really upset, it affects you really, really deeply? Like it's as if you're feeling ill, or upset, vicariously through them?

I still feel that way about America today. When America is unwell, it makes me feel a little unwell. Or when America is in danger over something, I feel like I'm in danger, or as if the worst might come to pass. Like, when America is erupting over a problem, then that problem must be at its worst possible version imaginable. I start to feel afraid that whatever that problem is in the world, it very soon will engulf us all here. I feel all this much more personally than I would expect of someone of my… politics.

When we started researching the events at Mosinee in 1950, I found John Decker and Francis Schweinler's interviews, about this man, Joseph Zack Kornfeder and we'd found my way in, to understanding it. Because Joseph Zack Kornfeder was an outsider, but one whose job it was to help Americans imagine themselves better. In higher definition. An expert in imagination. We realised, through his eyes, we could maybe start to imagine the whole country in better detail.

So now let's picture Kornfeder.

Let's assume you've imagined a man. Let's assume you've imagined a white man. This is 1950, so you're probably on the money. What else are you imagining?

Is he the big bad wolf? Or is he Robin Hood?

A real former Communist, revisiting his former identity to make the Day Under Communism feel more real, this is whose steps we've tried to retrace.

ACT TWO

KORNFEDER. Describe it to me. A day in the life of this town.

DECKER. Any…particular day of the week?

KORNFEDER. What day will it be? On the day?

DECKER. So, a Monday, so…

SCHWEINLER. Well, I'd go in to work.

KORNFEDER. Which is where?

SCHWEINLER. The *Mosinee Times* office.

KORNFEDER. What route would you take?

SCHWEINLER. Erm…via Western Avenue.

KORNFEDER. Give me more detail.

SCHWEINLER. Well, I'd… I live over here. At the Southeast suburb. So I drive in over the bridge going from…east to west. And then that leads down past Drengler's Tavern and Preston's Quality Bakery.

KORNFEDER. And what time is it?

SCHWEINLER. 6.30 a.m.

KORNFEDER. So you'd see the dawn?

SCHWEINLER. I…suppose I do. But I don't pay too much attention at that time. I'm just thinking about work. And the day ahead.

KORNFEDER. And you get yourself something nice at the bakery? Something to prepare you for the day ahead?

SCHWEINLER. Well, usually my wife has made breakfast, so… Maybe I'd stop there for a coffee, at least.

Why is that relevant?

KORNFEDER. And what else is happening around town, in the morning.

DECKER. So, lots of folk would be going to Church, or coming back, depending what time you mean…

KORNFEDER. Where are the churches?

DECKER. Lutheran church here, Baptist church there. And Catholic's there…but I should say now, sir, that the Catholic church, they aren't interested in being involved in whatever it is that you're…that we're planning.

But I can get back to them, and maybe they'll change their mind – in fact, let me get back to them. I'll get back to them today.

KORNFEDER. Where else would people be going? On this fine Monday morning?

DECKER. So, yes, so, Church, and then folk usually head into town to work. The Paper Mill in particular.

KORNFEDER. Is that the main employer?

SCHWEINLER. That's right.

KORNFEDER. Tell me more about the place. What do people do.

SCHWEINLER. I really don't know what you're after, sir. It's an ordinary town of two thousand people.

DECKER. Well, if you're interested in knowing the options for recreation, fishing's very popular, I believe. The Mayor's quite fond of it, I'm told. And then there's a movie theatre, and then…and then…there's shopping along this edge of the lake…but if you want anything more extravagant, then usually folk go Milwaukee ways.

KORNFEDER. And how do you end your Monday in this ordinary town? Mr Decker?

DECKER. Well, I don't really live there, I'm from Milwaukee. So I probably just go back there. But, um, on the occasion, I do to stay in town, I usually go bowling.

Over, um, here.

At the bowling alley.

KORNFEDER. Mr Schweinler?

SCHWEINLER. Well. My preferred way to end the day is at my home, sir. With my wife, Irene. There isn't anything more pleasant in the whole world, then to go back after a hard day's work, have her take my jacket, fix me a bourbon and serve me a piping hot dinner.

I'm sorry if you were after something more…extravagant.

KORNFEDER. No, that's quite perfect, Mr Schweinler. Where are the weak spots in Mosinee?

SCHWEINLER. What do you mean?

KORNFEDER. Pressure points. Nodes of instability, we called it at the Academy. Zones where there is a critical mass of potentiality for social disruption. That's where a movement can be catalysed.

DECKER. That's, uh, well, I think Francis is probably better placed to say than I am, but, uh,

SCHWEINLER. There isn't anything like that in this town.

KORNFEDER. You have to look at where in the town the most potent aggregation of complaint may lie. And that is where our Day Under Communism begins.

The Paper Mill. Are the workers there unionised?

SCHWEINLER. They are in the process of it, but it's, uh, it's complicated…

KORNFEDER. In the process…but not complete?

SCHWEINLER. Correct.

KORNFEDER. All the better. This Mill will be where the day begins.

DECKER. Come again?

KORNFEDER. Step by step over the course of the day, a conflagration spreads from a wildcat strike at the Paper Mill, which triggers a mass proletarian uprising, culminating in a coup d'etat, and the execution of the Mayor.

DECKER. What?

KORNFEDER. You need a violent decapitation of the power structure.

This is, by the way, the textbook case of what we studied at the Academy.

*

Now, unlike John Decker or Francis Schweinler or the other planners, Kornfeder never gave any interviews after the fact, to explain his experience. In fact, there are only scraps of material remaining from his own hand that shed light on what he was thinking. Here's what we found from one of his remaining journals, a couple of days after his arrival:

KORNFEDER. As I walked into the town, I took a route through their commercial quarter. Adverts everywhere. Even in a town this small, one cannot escape the neon. Shopfronts draped with coats and gloves and refrigerators and bathtubs and microwave ovens. Salesmen offering me new shoes or Cadillacs or record players. I kept my head down and walked by.

Even now, at the end of the day, I watched the people amiably making their way through shops and markets, chattering and laughing gaily. It was as if the world was passing them by. Like the times as I was experiencing them did not really exist. I realised that the whole