Acting Edition

Crime and Punishment, A Comedy

by Gordon Greenberg
and Steve Rosen

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SAMUEL FRENCH

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CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, A COMEDY was originally developed and produced at The Old Globe (Barry Edelstein, Erna Finci Viterbi Artistic Director; Timothy J. Shields, Audrey S. Geisel Managing Director) in San Diego, California and had its world premiere there on July 15, 2023. The production was directed by Gordon Greenberg, with scenic design by Wilson Chin, costume design by Alejo Vietti, lighting design by Amanda Zieve, and sound design by Lindsay Jones. The production stage manager was Marie Jahelka. The cast was as follows:

DMITRY AND OTHERS (ACTOR 1) . . . . . Vincent Randazzo
DUNYA AND OTHERS (ACTOR 2). . . . . Juliet Brett
SONYA AND OTHERS (ACTOR 3). . . . . Stephanie Gibson
PORFIRY AND OTHERS (ACTOR 4) . . . . . Orville Mendoza
RODYA RASKOLNIKOV (ACTOR 5) . . . . . Nik Walker

CHARACTERS

The breakdown of characters for the world premiere production was as follows:

ACTOR 1: DMITRY AND OTHERS: LANDLADY (MADAME MOLOTOV), MALE PASSENGER, BRUTISH NEIGHBOR, REPORTER ONE, REPORTER THREE, POLICEMAN TWO, GAVROCHE

ACTOR 2: DUNYA AND OTHERS: PASSENGER TWO, OFFICE MANAGER, TRAM DRIVER, CLERK, THREE SISTERS, FEMALE PASSENGER, EPONINE

ACTOR 3: SONYA AND OTHERS: ZHIVAGO, STRANGER, REPORTER TWO, PRISON GUARD

ACTOR 4: PORFIRY AND OTHERS: ROMAN, BURSAR, MOTHER, BROTHERS KARAMOZOV, POLICEMAN ONE, BORIS, ANOTHER MALE PASSENGER, COSETTE

ACTOR 5: RODYA RASKOLNIKOV

AUTHORS' NOTES

About style

This very loose adaptation of *Crime and Punishment*, Fyodor Dostoevsky's masterpiece of a novel, is our attempt to comedically riff on classic Russian literature while still exploring the original novel's major themes of guilt, morality, and social inequity. While some of the situations we've created are ridiculous, we strongly encourage this play be approached and performed with the gravity and sincerity one would utilize whilst doing a piece by Anton Chekhov. The conditions these characters live in are dire, and the stakes are extremely high.

We encourage you to create your own soundtrack that mixes genres from traditional Russian folk music to Soviet hip-hop to DDR Schlager. Ideally, this is a fast moving play with no breaks between scenes. We recommend keeping it light on its feet and creating the world of the play with abstract/minimal settings.

About casting and gender

The play was originally performed by five actors, each portraying several roles using simple costume pieces, physicality, and speech to quickly indicate character change. That said, productions may use more performers and divide the roles as they see fit without needing authorial permission.

All roles can be played by performers of any gender, ethnicity, age, or type.

PROLOGUE

(A mostly empty stage, flanked by aged wood siding, perhaps a few crates and a smattering of hay on the ground. A group of **ACTORS**, *dressed in Russian peasant garb, enters as they dutifully narrate –)*

ACTOR FOUR. In 1866, Russia was not the tropical wonderland we think of today.

ACTOR TWO. Indoor plumbing was scarce.

ACTOR ONE. Outdoor plumbing was scarce.

ACTOR THREE. The Crimean War had brought the economy to its knees, along with most of the population of St. Petersburg.

ACTOR ONE. Good, hard-working people struggled to afford basic necessities –

ACTOR TWO. Like food –

ACTOR ONE. Shelter –

ACTOR THREE. Vodka.

ACTOR FOUR. And justice was the sole province of those who could pay for it.

ACTOR TWO. On a typically frigid early-May morning –

ACTOR FIVE. A young man snuck through the bowels of a small, crumbling building with medicine for his sickly mother –

He walked quickly, trying to avoid their landlady –

Scene One: Boarding House – Hallway

*(**ACTOR FIVE** becomes **RODYA**; young, promising, and fueled by optimism. His ancient **LANDLADY** [**MADAME MOLOTOV**], smoking a cigarette in a babushka and housecoat, enters coughing.)*

LANDLADY (1). Rodya Raskolnikov!

(She coughs disgustingly, then drags from cigarette.)

RODYA (5). *(Startled.)* Madame Molotov!

LANDLADY. Your rent is five months overdue.

ACTOR THREE. Crushed by poverty, his family owed everyone.

RODYA. It's coming. I promise. I start my job at the law firm this very day!

LANDLADY. Finally graduated, huh?

RODYA. Just some paperwork, and I'm officially a lawyer.

ACTOR FOUR. But thanks to a strong belief that he could save them, he held on to hope.

ACTOR TWO. Which was, perhaps, the rarest commodity of all in 1866 Russia.

LANDLADY. I need money by the end of the week, or your family's out on the street. I have bills of my own.

RODYA. Yes of course. You'll have it. I promise.

LANDLADY. Every kopek.

RODYA. Yes, ma'am. And maybe a little something extra for your troubles!

LANDLADY. So young and optimistic. Wait 'til the world gets its hands on you.

RODYA. It is not what the world does to us but rather how we respond to it. And I have a plan. Now if you'll excuse me, I need to bring this to my mother, and –

LANDLADY. *(Pulling out a letter and handing it to Rodya.)* Ah! This came for her today. From your father in Siberia. He's very long-winded.

*(***RODYA** *shoots her a look.)*

I shouldn't have read it, but it's a slow news day.

(Music.[*]*)*

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Scene Two: Raskolnikov Flat

*(***MRS. PULCHERIA ALEXANDROVNA RASKOLNIKOV** *[***MOTHER***], fifties but looking eighty, convalesces in a wheelchair for the fifth straight month, moaning as her daughter,* **DUNYA ROMANOVNA RASKOLNIKOV***, just twenty, fixes a meager breakfast over a wood-burning stove, with her head in a book.)*

ACTOR THREE. In their flat, Rodya administered the remedy to his ailing mother.

RODYA. This should bring you some relief, Mother.

MOTHER (4). *(Weakly.)* Bless you, my son.

ACTOR THREE. In and out of consciousness, she was fighting for her life.

MOTHER. Gentle, gentle. It hurts.

RODYA. Sorry, Mama. Hopefully this will help bring your fever down.

MOTHER. I don't suppose you managed to pick up a little something sweet?

RODYA. I'm sorry, I spent all I had on the medication.

MOTHER. That's alright. I'm only mildly disappointed in you.

RODYA. Do not fear, it won't be long before we are eating sweets every day.

ACTOR ONE. They lived in a tiny garret that was more a cupboard than a room, crammed in with his sister Dunya.

DUNYA (2). *(Re her book.)* Don't do it Tatiana! You will be so unhappy!

MOTHER. What is it?!

DUNYA. She deserves to be with Onegin!

RODYA. Another novel.

DUNYA. Yes! It's so deeply sad. I *love* it!

ACTOR ONE. A hopeless romantic, Dunya escaped the misery of her life by reading about the misery of others.

RODYA. *(Sniffing.)* Something is burning.

DUNYA. Breakfast! Sorry! I was so distracted by their suffering.

MOTHER. As opposed to ours?

RODYA. Patience, Mother. Today, I become a lawyer and can officially file father's appeal.

MOTHER. Thank God. We must free him from that awful prison.

RODYA. We will! And soon, I promise.

MOTHER. You're a good boy, Rodya. But there are limits to what even you can do. The world is not as good as you believe, son.

RODYA. Papa always said hard work pays off, and a man can accomplish anything he sets his mind to. He'll be back home before you know it.

MOTHER. I hope you're right, child. We haven't heard from him in months.

RODYA. *(Playful.)* Haven't we? Then what's this I found in the post, from a certain prison in Siberia!!

MOTHER. Papa!

DUNYA. A letter from Papa?! Read it! Read it at once!

RODYA. Yes, of course. Let's see.

> *(***ACTOR FOUR** *stands up, removes Mother's babushka and robe to reveal prison uniform, becoming...***ROMAN RASKOLNIKOV***, father of Rodya, writing from prison.)*

ROMAN (4). My Dear Family. I hope this finds you all as well as can be expected. I have now suffered through three full years in the gulag. Three years in here on a trumped-up charge for picking discarded food out of a rubbish bin. We had nothing to eat, while there were banquets going on at the Grand Hotel. Can you imagine? All I did was take what they threw away, and they sent me to this frozen hell.

DUNYA. Poor Papa. His despair is palpable.

ROMAN. But by my calculations, Rodya should now be graduated from law school and able to use his overpriced education to free me from this wretched place. It cannot come soon enough. I am beginning to fear that by the time I am released, your mother will have perished or worse, lost her looks. My dear wife, whose embrace is like nourishment, whose ample bosom I long to squeeze, whose thick sturdy legs are more flexible than a –

RODYA. Ooookay.

(Scanning.) Skip ahead, skip ahead.

ROMAN. Please hurry. Our family's future is in your hands. Your beloved Father.

*(***ACTOR FOUR** *puts Mother's robe and babushka back on and sits back down in wheelchair.)*

DUNYA. There is no justice in the world! The real criminals are the ones in charge.

RODYA. We will find justice, Dunya.

DUNYA. I pray you are right.

RODYA. No prayers necessary. I have spent three years of sleepless nights studying the law with the solitary goal of clearing father's name.

DUNYA. And I believe you will, I do. It is just…sometimes, I struggle to maintain my faith. I have been trying to balance our family's accounts and keep the creditors at bay, but the numbers don't lie.

(Sound effects: doorbell rings [perhaps a funny Russian tune]*.)*

Finally, it's Doctor Zhivago.

*(***DR. ZHIVAGO** *enters with doctor's bag, all business.)*

DR. ZHIVAGO (3). Good morning. How is she?

DUNYA. Getting worse, I'm afraid.

DR. ZHIVAGO. I'll be the judge of that.

(To **MOTHER***.)* Say "ah."

MOTHER. *(Immediately.)* Ah

DR. ZHIVAGO. *(Immediately.)* She's getting worse.

DUNYA. Isn't that what I just…

DR. ZHIVAGO. Thus is the nature of brain fever. If we do not make a serious intervention, she has perhaps a matter of weeks, maybe days.

RODYA. My God.

DUNYA. So what's the plan?

DR. ZHIVAGO. Well the first step would be paying my bill.

RODYA. Absolutely, as soon as I receive my first wages.

DR. ZHIVAGO. I'd hate to refuse service, but I won't be back until I get paid.

RODYA. How can you say that? Did you not take an oath?

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DR. ZHIVAGO. Yes, I promised my wife I'd get her a dacha in Minsk.

RODYA. You will have your money, doctor. You deserve to be paid.

DR. ZHIVAGO. How generous of you. Good day, Raskolnikovs.

*(***DR. ZHIVAGO** *exits.)*

MOTHER. No lollipop?

*(***MOTHER** *falls back asleep.)*

DUNYA. A matter of days?! Rodya, what are we going to do?!

RODYA. We will get the doctor back, I promise. This is curable. It's just a matter of money.

DUNYA. We have none! How will we pay the doctor? And the landlady? And the government has their hand out for all of father's fines.

RODYA. Dunya, Dunya. Do I not always find a way for us?

DUNYA. You do. But you are only one person. I worry you spend so much time managing us you neglect yourself.

RODYA. Me? I'm great, I have everything I need.

DUNYA. No. No more struggling. It is my turn to figure it out. I must get this family back on its feet, even if it means sacrificing my future.

RODYA. What do you mean?

DUNYA. Arkady has asked me to marry him.

RODYA. Arkady? Your boss?!

DUNYA. He is very wealthy.

RODYA. It's bad enough you have to work for that disgusting pig. You can't marry him.

DUNYA. *(Struggling to be positive.)* He is well respected within the government. He will settle all our debts without making the smallest dent in his fortune.

You should see the size of the ring he picked out at Fabergé.

RODYA. He's a drunk. And forty years your senior.

DUNYA. There are worse things.

RODYA. With a wandering eye.

DUNYA. He's having that fixed.

RODYA. Dunya –

DUNYA. He says he loves me. And even if the feeling isn't mutual, he is a means to an end.

RODYA. You can't do that!

DUNYA. So, what, just allow Mama to die? I have to do something.

RODYA. You put me through school working for him! You've done enough!

DUNYA. *(Trying not to cry.)* I don't mind, really. I will be fine.

RODYA. You deserve to be with someone you love. Please. Before you make any rash decisions, give me a chance to fix this.

DUNYA. You heard the doctor. We're running out of time.

RODYA. An advance! Of course. I'll get an advance on my salary. My new law firm has more money than the Tsar!

DUNYA. But you're just starting work today. You really think they'd give you an advance?

RODYA. Why not? Big firms do it all the time.

DUNYA. They do?

RODYA. You have my word, Dunya. I will get us the money.

(He kisses her head.)

(Sound effects: church bell.)

I'm off. Can't miss my tram! Our future begins today!

(He darts off.)

MOTHER. Don't run, it's not a race!

(Music. Into the streets.* **ACTOR FOUR** *removes Mother's costume and immediately narrates…)*

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Scene Three: Streets of St. Petersburg

ACTOR FOUR. He raced down the street, weaving through the morning crowds.

(We hear sound of crowds. **RODYA** *veers right, left, right.)*

RODYA. Ha! Ho! Ha!

(The other **ACTORS** *rhythmically mimic and echo his movements, veering right, left, right.)*

ACTORS ONE, TWO, THREE & FOUR. Ha! Ho! Ha!

ACTOR FIVE. So high were his spirits. He felt like he was floating.

ALL. Ha! Ho! Ha!

(Sound effects: trolley car "ding ding.")

ACTOR FIVE. Until he arrived at the tram…

(Music out.)

(On the tram.)

*(***RODYA** *drops change in the fare box.)*

(Sound effects: coin clank, clank.)

(Sound effects: tram moves.)

ACTOR FOUR. They lurched down Pavlov Street –

(Sound effects: "ding ding." **EVERYONE** *pants like a dog.)*

Out the window Rody spied his oldest and best chum running to catch the tram.

DMITRY (1). Hold the door, if you please!

RODYA. Driver, just a moment?

*(***DMITRY RAZUMIKHIN** *hops on, holding a lunch pail and wearing a satchel. He drops change in fare box.)*

(Sound effects: clank clank.)

DMITRY. *(Breathless.)* I made it.

(Sound effects: tram moves.)

RODYA. Dmitry!

DMITRY. Rody! Today's the day, huh?

RODYA. Indeed it is!

DMITRY. I am so very proud of you. You got through law school on your own – without so much as a single bribe.

RODYA. Couldn't afford to pay them anyway.

DMITRY. Still, you set a goal and you achieved it. You make it look easy. Nothing frightens you.

RODYA. What's to be scared of?

DMITRY. Oh, don't ask *me* that. You know I'm scared of everything.

RODYA. That's why you have me around, to look out for you.

DMITRY. I have always been grateful for that. I remember back at school everyone thought you were my brother, from the way you protected me; the quiet boy who lived with his grandmother.

RODYA. People mistake your sensitivity for weakness.

DMITRY. No, from a physical standpoint, I am actually quite weak.

(The tram "turns" and the **PASSENGERS** *all lean for a moment.)*

RODYA. Dmitry! Your vulnerability is your strength.

DMITRY. That reminds me, I wrote a poem for you! Inscribed on a piece of birch wood I saved from our old schoolyard.

*(***DMITRY** *pulls a piece of broken birchwood from his satchel and hands it to* **RODYA**.*)*

RODYA. *(Touched.)* How sweet you are – but it looks like perhaps a portion is missing?

DMITRY. Oh, no! Cedric must have eaten it right off. He'll eat anything. Last week, he got into my fishing hat and ate half the lining.

RODYA. Cedric?

DMITRY. A mouse I found.

(He holds up a cute mouse.)

(Sound effects: mouse squeak.)

RODYA. Are you crazy? A city mouse could very well be diseased. You must kill it at once.

DMITRY. Never! Who am I to decide whether something lives or dies?

RODYA. Well, you *are* an exterminator.

(Sound effects: ding ding!)

CONDUCTOR. University!

RODYA. This is me!

DMITRY. University? Aren't you starting at the law firm this morning?

RODYA. As soon as I collect my diploma. We'll celebrate tonight at the tavern!

DMITRY. I will come over to fetch you. It will be nice to see Dunya.

RODYA. She is always pleased to see you.

DMITRY. The thought of her smile will brighten my entire morning as I remove slugs from the basement of the Ministry of Culture.

(Sound effects: church bell.)

ACTOR THREE. The church bell struck eight as Rody entered the University's finance building. A pale blue neoclassical structure that Peter The Second had built in an effort to mirror the enlightened Europeans to their west. It now housed all academic and financial records for the Law School.

ACTOR ONE. At the reception desk, Rody was sent upstairs to the registrar's office.

RODYA. Okay.

*(***RODYA** *climbs imaginary stairs. The other* **ACTORS** *echo his movements and sounds.)*

Hup, hup, hup, *(Etc.)*!

ACTORS ONE, TWO, THREE & FOUR. Hup, hup, hup, *(Etc.)*!

(Sound effects: door open.)

ACTOR TWO. At the registrar's office, he was sent upstairs to the comptroller's office.

RODYA. Alright.

*(***RODYA** *climbs more imaginary stairs. Again, the* **OTHERS** *echo his movements and sounds...)*

Hup, hup, hup... *(Etc.)*!

ACTORS ONE, TWO, THREE & FOUR. Hup, hup, hup... *(Etc.)*!

(Sound effects: door open.)

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

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