Acting Edition

ARCHDUKE

BY RAJIV JOSEPH

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.

This sample may not reflect the version of the play currently in print.

DPS
DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE

Copyright © 2026 by Rajiv Joseph
Cover design by Guy J Sanders
All Rights Reserved

ARCHDUKE is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, the British Commonwealth, including Canada, and all member countries of the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, the Universal Copyright Convention, and/or the World Trade Organization conforming to the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. 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 978-0-8222-4615-2

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
licensing@concordtheatricals.co.uk
020-7054-7298

Each title is subject to availability from Concord Theatricals Corp., depending upon country of performance. Please be aware that *ARCHDUKE* may not be licensed by Concord Theatricals Corp. in your territory. Professional and amateur producers should contact the nearest Concord Theatricals Corp. office or licensing partner to verify availability.

CAUTION: Professional and amateur producers are hereby warned that *ARCHDUKE* is subject to a licensing fee. The purchase, renting, lending or use of this book does not constitute a license to perform this title(s), which license must be obtained from Concord Theatricals Corp. prior to any performance. Performance of this title(s) without a license is a violation of federal law and may subject the producer and/or presenter of such performances to civil 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(s) is presented for charity or gain and whether or not admission is charged. Professional/Stock licensing fees are quoted upon application to Concord Theatricals Corp.

This work is published by Dramatists Play Service, an imprint of Concord Theatricals Corp.

No one shall make any changes in this title(s) 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(s), or any part of this title(s), through any social media or file hosting websites.

For all inquiries regarding motion picture, television, online/digital and other media rights, please contact Concord Theatricals Corp.

MUSIC AND THIRD-PARTY MATERIALS USE NOTE

Licensees are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted music and/or other 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 music and materials that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for clearances of all third-party copyrighted materials, including without limitation music, and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play(s) and their licensing agent, Concord Theatricals Corp., against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of such copyrighted third-party materials by licensees. For music, please contact the appropriate music licensing authority in your territory for the rights to any incidental music.

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.

ARCHDUKE was originally produced in New York by Roundabout Theatre Company (Scott Ellis, Interim Artistic Director; Sydney Beers, Executive Producer) at the Harold and Miriam Steinberg Center for Theatre, Laura Pels Theatre on November 12, 2025. The production was directed by Darko Tresnjak; with set design by Alexander Dodge; costume design by Linda Cho; lighting design by Matthew Richards; sound design by Jane Shaw; hair, wig & makeup design by Tom Watson; and fight direction by Rocío Mendez. The production stage manager was Katie Young. The cast was as follows:

GAVRILO . . . . . Jake Berne
NEDELJKO . . . . . Jason Sanchez
TRIFKO . . . . . .Adrien Rolet
DRAGUTIN "APIS" DIMITRIJEVIĆ . . . . . Patrick Page
SLADJANA . . . . . .Kristine Nielsen

ARCHDUKE was produced by the Royal Court Theatre (David Byrne, Artistic Director; Will Young, Executive Director) in association with Brian & Dayna Lee and opened at the Jerwood Theatre Downstairs on June 20, 2026. The production was directed by Lyndsey Turner, with design by Es Devlin, lighting design by Neil Austin, sound design by Tingying Dong, costume design by Evie Gurney, and illusion design by Skylar Fox. The stage manager was Lizzie Chapman. The cast was as follows:

GAVRILO . . . . . .Stanley Morgan
NEDELJKO . . . . . .Chris Walley
TRIFKO . . . . . .Abraham Popoola
DRAGUTIN "APIS" DIMITRIJEVIĆ . . . . . Marc Wootton
SLADJANA . . . . . .Janice Connolly

ARCHDUKE was originally commissioned and produced by Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum (Michael Ritchie, Artistic Director; Charles Dillingham, Managing Director), Los Angeles, CA

CHARACTERS

GAVRILO – m, 19
NEDELJKO – m, 19
TRIFKO – m, 20
DRAGUTIN "APIS" DIMITRIJEVIĆ – m, 40s–50s
SLADJANA – f, 60s

SETTING

Belgrade, Zemun, and Sarajevo

TIME

1914

NOTE ON TEXT

Indented lines indicate that all characters should speak simultaneously.

ACT ONE

Scene One

(An abandoned warehouse.)

(Night.)

*(**GAVRILO**, a teenage boy, frail, underfed, sickly enters the warehouse. He has a black eye.)*

(He looks around nervously.)

GAVRILO. Ey, hello?

(Beat.)

To anyone… I'm here! To…be of service and…
Not sure…

(He thinks, tries another tact.)

I'm here on account of the Doctor! The Doctor who has the clinic up over on the hill…?

(Beat; no response.)

(He sighs; maybe this is all a waste.)

(To himself.) Ain't no one here.
Just me and my –

(He coughs, hard three times. The third time, he takes out a lace handkerchief and coughs into it.)

(A dark red spot of fresh blood is now on the kerchief. He's aggrieved that he's gotten this nice kerchief bloody.)

GAVRILO. Ah… Sorry.
I just cleaned you…

(He tries cleaning it by wiping it on his pants.)

(A sound, someone entering… **GAVRILO** *hides.)*

*(***NEDELJKO***, nineteen, enters. He's dressed in dirty clothes. He's a ragamuffin like* **GAVRILO***.)*

(He looks nervous, shifty-eyed. He looks around, he doesn't see **GAVRILO** *in the shadows.)*

(Like **GAVRILO***,* **NEDELJKO** *doesn't know what he's doing there.)*

NEDELJKO. Ey!
Announcing hisself: Nedeljko Cabrinovic, here on the advice of the Doc who's free!

(Beat.)

Ey, anyone here then?

(A box where **GAVRILO** *is hiding drops.* **NEDELJKO** *spins to him, seeing him.)*

(They stare at each other…tense…)

GAVRILO. Ey.

NEDELJKO. Ey.

GAVRILO. Ey.

NEDELJKO. You the guy?

GAVRILO. What?

NEDELJKO. You the guy?

GAVRILO. I dunno.

NEDELJKO. Supposed to meet a guy.

GAVRILO. *I'm* supposed to meet a guy.

NEDELJKO. You the guy?

GAVRILO. *You* the guy?

NEDELJKO. I'm not the guy! I'm supposed to *meet* a guy.

GAVRILO. Maybe we're both the guy. Name's Gavrilo.

NEDELJKO. Nedeljko.

GAVRILO. Midnight sharp, he said.

NEDELJKO. Who said?

GAVRILO. The Doc.

NEDELJKO. That Doc who does it for free?

GAVRILO. Yeah, midnight sharp, Doc said.

NEDELJKO. What time's it now?

GAVRILO. I dunno.

NEDELJKO. Close to midnight.

GAVRILO. Doc warned me: Don't be late, says the Doc.

NEDELJKO. I figured it was a job, this here deal.

GAVRILO. Doc say a job?

NEDELJKO. It was implied.

GAVRILO. He didn't say nuthin' about a job to me. He was talking about the meaning in life.

NEDELJKO. What's that mean?

GAVRILO. I dunno. Doc told me, come here to this old place at midnight. Told me there'd be a guy who'd give me meaning in my life.

NEDELJKO. Then I am definitely not the guy.

GAVRILO. So there's *another* guy.

NEDELJKO. Question is: Where is he?

GAVRILO. *Who* is he?

NEDELJKO. I care more about where. Or when. I want a job. I could go for some payment. Get some money, go to Spaten…

GAVRILO. *Spaten.*

NEDELJKO. You ever had?

GAVRILO. Once, saw a man toss out his sandwich, half finished. I tore into that, no question.

NEDELJKO. A nun bought me a sandwich once.

GAVRILO. Brand new?

NEDELJKO. Still hot.

GAVRILO. No!

NEDELJKO. That's what nuns do, bre: Brides of Christ and they buy you sandwiches. Direct from Spaten. I sat there on the street, everyone walking by.

GAVRILO. Oh man. Still hot? Spaten.
Why you go to the Doc to begin with?

NEDELJKO. They said he did it for free, so I say, why not, can't hurt, probably good idea. Get a generalized bill of health and so forth.
Medical.
Also I was coughin' up blood.
What about you?

GAVRILO. I got this black eye.

NEDELJKO. From what?

GAVRILO. Fisticuffs.

NEDELJKO. With who?

GAVRILO. A guy.

NEDELJKO. How you manage?

GAVRILO. I manage, even though I'm small.

NEDELJKO. You ain't small.

GAVRILO. Smaller than most.

NEDELJKO. You ain't small. If you're small, I'm small and I ain't small.
Nuns always said: *"You are special and big."*

GAVRILO. I get in there, Doc says: Take off your shirt.

NEDELJKO. That's the Doc.

GAVRILO. I say, Ey Doc, I came in here for *this* masterpiece. But he's listening to my chest, telling me to breathe so I do. He says breathe harder. So I do. And then it's just a mess. I'm coughing up blood all into his kerchief. Which was fancy.

*(**GAVRILO** reveals the lace kerchief.)*

He let me keep it after all that.

*(**NEDELJKO** looks at the kerchief, is jealous of it.)*

NEDELJKO. Doc gave you that?

GAVRILO. It's fancy. Lace. Flowers. Said it was his wife's. I figure it's the prettiest thing I ever owned. Even with some blood on it. You can always wash that out.

(Beat.)

So turns out I'm a lunger.

NEDELJKO. Same thing happened to me. I didn't come out of it with no souvenir, though.

GAVRILO. We're both lungers.

NEDELJKO. Doc said "consumption," but then he calls it "tuberculosis." *Pick a name!*

GAVRILO. There's a lot of names for what we got. "Punch-lung." "Bits and Pieces." "The Red and Yellow…"

NEDELJKO. Doc don't look at you when he talks to you. And he got food in his teeth! I ever get food in my teeth? I suck it out, I eat it.

GAVRILO. I couldn't think on it right away. When he told me.

NEDELJKO. Couldn't think on what?

GAVRILO. Fact of bein' a lunger.
What'd you think when he told you?

NEDELJKO. When he told me *what*?

GAVRILO. That you was a lunger!

NEDELJKO. I dunno! What's it matter?

GAVRILO. What's it matter? *We're gonna die!*

NEDELJKO. *What?*

GAVRILO. Yeah.

NEDELJKO. What are you talking about? We ain't dyin'!

GAVRILO. What you think the consumption IS?

NEDELJKO. A cough!

GAVRILO. Means you're *dyin'*!

NEDELJKO. That ain't what it means!

GAVRILO. Yeah it do!

NEDELJKO. How could it mean that!

GAVRILO. You never heard of consumption?!

NEDELJKO. I don't know disease names!

GAVRILO. We're dyin'. And soon, too. According to the Doc, we're dead men, here, the two of us.

NEDELJKO. *Well, why wouldn't he SAY THAT?!*

GAVRILO. What'd he say?

NEDELJKO. Told me I had the consumption and then told me to come here.

GAVRILO. He left out what it entailed.

NEDELJKO. SEEMS SO! I don't wanna die!

GAVRILO. Me neither!

NEDELJKO. I'm not old!

GAVRILO. We're young!

NEDELJKO. It's just a cough! It's just some blood in my lungs getting coughed up! How's that gonna kill someone! Especially someone like me, who's healthy!

*(***NEDELJKO** *really begins to despair. He sits on a crate, turns away from* **GAVRILO**. *Maybe he begins to cry – it's hard to say.)*

*(***GAVRILO** *approaches him cautiously, wanting to comfort him.)*

GAVRILO. I was supposed to die when I was born.
Some other doc told Ma, *the baby will die.*
Ma took me to the priest. Priest tells her to change my name to Gavrilo, which is after the Angel Gavrilo, angel of the Lord and so forth. Said the Angel would give me strength. I dunno about all that, but I'm still alive.
Like what your nuns say: We are special and big.

*(***GAVRILO** *touches* **NEDELJKO***'s back, in sympathy.* **NEDELJKO** *recoils.)*

NEDELJKO. Ey! Don't touch!

GAVRILO. Sorry!

NEDELJKO. Leave me alone!

GAVRILO. Sorry!

(Long beat. **GAVRILO** *watches him.)*

(Holds out kerchief.) Ey… You want this?
You can have it. It's fancy. Got lace and so forth.

NEDELJKO. Ain't no kerchief gonna make me feel better.

(But after a beat, **NEDELJKO** *takes the kerchief anyhow, and looks at it, maybe for comfort.)*

(Long beat. **NEDELJKO** *may be crying again,* **GAVRILO** *can't tell.)*

GAVRILO. When Doc told me… When I found out I was a lunger…
I went to a bridge. This wooden thing, out over the river. Thought about tossin' myself in. Killing myself.

NEDELJKO. *(A whole new thing.) What?!*

GAVRILO. Yeah.

NEDELJKO. Who thinks on *that*?!

GAVRILO. It was a passing thought!

NEDELJKO. That's wrong! Sinful! A sin!

GAVRILO. I didn't *do* nuthin'!

NEDELJKO. Thinkin' it is bad enough!

GAVRILO. I had never thought about it before!

NEDELJKO. Do yourself a favor: Don't think.

GAVRILO. What am I gonna do if I don't think?

NEDELJKO. Maybe go find yourself another black eye.

GAVRILO. I was sad. Like you are now.

NEDELJKO. I ain't sad, I'm angry, and even if I was sad, which I am, I'm not about to suicide myself! God's got

no mercy for the suicide! Why would you even think that?!

GAVRILO. It was a passing thought.

NEDELJKO. How much time we got before we die?

GAVRILO. Doc said maybe a month or maybe a little bit more than a month.

NEDELJKO. A *month*?!
That's soon. That's too soon. How can it do that?

GAVRILO. Mortality.

NEDELJKO. Shut your mouth, I don't like you.

GAVRILO. What did I do?

NEDELJKO. For one, you don't care you're gonna die! –

GAVRILO. I do too!

NEDELJKO. For two, you sit around contemplating suicide!
For three, I don't like you!
You talkin' about your Ma and bein' a baby!
I never met my Ma.
She dropped me at the convent when I was born.
I knew she had to do stuff to make sure she was okay.
I *assumed* I'd meet her. One day. I assumed that would happen.

(Beat.)

I'm never gonna meet her. I'm gonna die.

GAVRILO. Maybe she's already dead, your Ma.

NEDELJKO. *What you say?!*

GAVRILO. I'm sayin'! Maybe she's in heaven…and you'll…

NEDELJKO. *What you say to me?! Come here…*

*(***NEDELJKO** *chases* **GAVRILO** *who tries to evade…)*

GAVRILO. I'm sorry! I meant, maybe you'll meet her! In heaven! It was nice what I said!

NEDELJKO. Don't talk about Ma bein' dead!

*(***NEDELJKO** *grabs* **GAVRILO**, *wrestles him into a headlock, starts punching him. Then* **NEDELJKO** *screams, as if his finger has been bitten.)*

AH! *YOU BIT ME!*

GAVRILO. You attacked me!

NEDELJKO. YOU BIT ME LIKE A DOG!

GAVRILO. I'm sorry!

NEDELJKO. *WHY YOU DO THAT?!*

GAVRILO. I'm small! I gotta bite!

(They calm as they nurse their bruises, wounds, but they keep a distance from each other.)

NEDELJKO. *(Looking at his finger.)* You bit through to the bone!

GAVRILO. No I didn't…

NEDELJKO. Yeah!

GAVRILO. Lemme see…

*(***NEDELJKO** *shows him.)*

NEDELJKO. See?

GAVRILO. That ain't bone!

NEDELJKO. It feels like it!

GAVRILO. It ain't!

NEDELJKO. It hurts.

(They sit apart, quiet.)

GAVRILO. I hate it when people attack me.
People always do, because I'm small.

NEDELJKO. I tell you I never will meet my Ma, and your response: "Oh, she's dead." What kind of thing to say is that?
This here is bone!

GAVRILO. I didn't bite you that hard!

(Awkward, long beat.)

Ey...
Ey...

NEDELJKO. *What?*

GAVRILO. How's your finger.

NEDELJKO. Hurts.

GAVRILO. My finger hurts too.

NEDELJKO. I didn't bite you.

GAVRILO. I know. My finger hurts all the time. So I know how you feel.
Can I ask you something?

NEDELJKO. No.

GAVRILO. You ever been with a woman?

NEDELJKO. What? Have I ever "been" with one?

(Beat.)

Yeah, why?

GAVRILO. I never been with one.
That's what I thought when the Doc told me.
I'm never gonna be with a woman.
Always thought I would.

(Beat.)

GAVRILO. Wouldn't mind knowin' what all that might entail.

(Beat.)

What's it like?

NEDELJKO. What's it like?

GAVRILO. Yeah, like, how would you describe it?

(Beat.)

NEDELJKO. I dunno. It's like taking a bath with a bunch of rabbits.

GAVRILO. Because of...

NEDELJKO. Feels soft and warm but also, "what am I doing here?"

(They sit in silence.)

GAVRILO. I'm sorry I bit you.

NEDELJKO. It's okay.
Didn't go to the bone.

GAVRILO. I knew it didn't.
I would know if I saw. I know bones. I hate seeing bones.

NEDELJKO. Me too.

GAVRILO. Ey... You know the Doc's office... He's got that skeleton in there?

NEDELJKO. Yeah, I seen it.

GAVRILO. The whole skeleton there. Hangin' off a hook and so forth...

NEDELJKO. I said I seen it and I don't like it.

GAVRILO. Yeah well... Guess what? That skeleton? It's a *woman,* that thing.

NEDELJKO. The bones?
In what way?
How you know that?

GAVRILO. I ask the Doc if those bones were really once upon a time an actual man and so forth, but then Doc goes ahead and points out they were lady bones.

NEDELJKO. Where's Doc getting Lady Bones?

GAVRILO. I mean, that's the question! I asked him the same! The asylum, he tells me.

NEDELJKO. How's that work?

GAVRILO. Some ladies go crazy, and they go to the asylum.

NEDELJKO. I know what's an asylum! Just didn't know asylums was the go-to place for lady bones!

GAVRILO. She hung herself, the woman.

NEDELJKO. *What?!*

GAVRILO. A suicide.

NEDELJKO. It's a sin.

GAVRILO. I had so many questions. Asked him how old she was when she did that. He said 'bout my age.

NEDELJKO. How old are you?

GAVRILO. Nineteen.

NEDELJKO. Same as me.

GAVRILO. I asked Doc what her name was.

NEDELJKO. And he says?

GAVRILO. Said she didn't have one.

NEDELJKO. That's a lie.

GAVRILO. That's what I said, too. I gave her a name right then and there. Named her *Dubravka.*

NEDELJKO. *(As if this is his final statement on the matter.)*
I don't want women havin' bones.
I'm goin'.

GAVRILO. Where you goin'?

NEDELJKO. Somewhere *not here.*

GAVRILO. Why not wait and see if the guy shows up.

NEDELJKO. To offer us what? A job?
You know what it is? They want us to work 'cause they know they won't have to pay us!
Knowin' they can bypass a payday on account of our condition! Because we'll be *dead.*

GAVRILO. He's gonna offer us meaning in life.

NEDELJKO. What's that, what's "meaning"? You keep saying that.

GAVRILO. Maybe it's a vocation, like priests.

NEDELJKO. I wanted to be a priest. Priests told me no.

GAVRILO. I think maybe "meaning in life"...it can be something inside of you.

NEDELJKO. Like bones?

GAVRILO. No. Like...
I dunno...

(Beat.)

When I was on that bridge, lookin' down in the water...
I was really thinkin' on throwing myself in there.
I woulda been dead in seconds...
But then guess what?

(Beat.)

I heard a voice.

WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

Please visit our website to buy the full script, apply for a license to perform this show (if it's available), or to explore hundreds of similar titles.

www.concordtheatricals.com

www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

To be the first to know about new books, licensing releases, and anything theater-related, follow us on our social media channels.

@ConcordShows and **@ConcordUKShows** on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

concord
theatricals