

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL DONUTS

By
Jordan Beswick

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL DONUTS

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For Edna

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OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL DONUTS was originally produced at Le Théâtre du Lucernaire, in Paris, France, by Sokol.M Productions and Mise en Lumière, translation by Tatiana Gousseff, directed by the author, assisted by Chloé Hollings-Plot, and featuring the following cast:

Edna Natasha Mashkevich

This production also played Festivals in Belgium, Brazil and Germany.

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL DONUTS was performed in the following US Theatre Festivals:

Greensboro Fringe Festival and Creative Greensboro, in Greensboro, NC, produced by Todd Fisher, directed by the author and featuring the following cast:

Edna Shelley Stolaroff Segal

Powerstories Theatre, Voices of Truth Festival, in Tampa, FL, produced by Fran Powers (Founder and Executive/Artistic Director), directed by the author and featuring the following cast:

Edna Amelia Campbell

Marsh Theatre, MarshStream International Solo Fest 2, Elizabeth Zitrin, Executive Producer, Sharon Eberhardt, Program Manager, Program Director, David Hirata, General Manager, directed by the author and featuring the following cast:

Edna Amelia Campbell

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CAST: 1 Woman

EDNA. 50, blond, divorced mother of three, owns a popular neighborhood donut shop in Hayward, California, where she works with her sons. Oh, and she saves children in her spare time.

TIME: 1990

PLACE: California Correctional Facility for female youth offenders, ages of 13 and 17

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1990. Lights rise slowly on EDNA (50, blond hair swept up in an attractive bun, warm, bright spring colored blouse and skirt, low heels, a visitor badge hangs from her neck) addressing inmates at a correctional facility for female youth offenders, ages of 13 and 17.

EDNA. A man packs up his family, their meager belongings, piles everything into a covered wagon, and joins a wagon train heading West. He's heard stories of wide-open spaces, gold in some parts, but even more enticing to him, unclaimed land. Just sitting there waiting for a nice family like his to come along and stake it out. A place to call home. And provide a livelihood. Security. The journey however, he's told, is perilous. Between point A and the promised land are blood thirsty savages itching for any opportunity to add to their already impressive collection of scalps. Human scalps. But given life where he is, he opts to risk it. Along the way he entertains his children with fantastical stories of the adventures that await. Shares the proud history of their vast country. When the wagons would circle for the night, the tired travelers would light campfires, prepare dinner, enjoy the camaraderie of their fellow dreamers, and sleep beneath a canopy of the most dazzling stars imaginable. Then one day a bunch of pissed off Cherokees who don't take kindly to folks moving in on their territory and claiming it for their own as if by divine right attack and slaughter the lot. What? You didn't see a massacre coming? Actually, there was one survivor. One of the man's children. A little girl who was taken in by the Cherokees and raised as one of them. She grew up, married a brave and bore his children. Then, surprise, surprise, the Cherokees got attacked by a regiment of soldiers. Another massacre. Some of the women and children survived. Including the white woman raised as a

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Cherokee. Well, when the soldiers saw she was white they did the math and told her that she was free to rejoin the white world. But not her savage kids. So, she declined and spent the rest of her life on a reservation. That was my great great grandmother. I know. What's with the blonde hair when I'm a good three quarters Cherokee? Looks can be deceiving. This isn't the first time I've been in a correctional facility. I've spent a lot of time visiting people in places like this. My younger brother mainly. He served time at Atascadero State Hospital. A maximum-security facility for sexually violent predators. No, I know the drill. Far too well. Shoot, my mama met my daddy in prison. And married him three weeks later. He'd robbed a store he was working at. But he was only in prison briefly because my grandpa went to the police and said he'd done it. God knows what possessed him. Worst thing he could've done. It set a tone in my daddy's life. Just like later on a tone would be set in my brother's. Maybe I'm just tone deaf. Better for me. I was what you call a blue baby. A baby that's born dead. That's what the doctor told my daddy. But daddy was having none of that. He picked me up and started hitting me. Hard. Trying to revive me. Anything to get me to make a sound. The doctor was tending to mama, who was near death herself, but when he heard the beating daddy was giving me, he stopped what he was doing and said, you're gonna break every bone in that baby's body. As if it mattered. I mean, I was dead, right? He said, I'll give it another try just to satisfy you but the baby's dead. There were a lot of years when I wished I had died. Believed it would have been the merciful thing. Given what was in store for me. When I was five years old, in the middle of a little family reunion, my daddy announced he was gonna go lie down and wanted me to lie with him. Which I did. I mean, you snuggle with your daddy, right? I was just drifting off when he reached over, took my hand and tried to get me to play with him. Scared me to death. I ran out of there fast. Didn't say a word to anybody. I just stood by my mother. I made a choice. Not all five-year-olds would have made the choice I did. What in me, even then, made me choose silence? Fear affects people in different ways. It didn't paralyze my body, I fled. My vocal cords were another story. One of my

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nephews is gay, so he keeps me informed about everything going on with him and his friends in the face of the AIDS crises, and when he shared with me Act Up's Silence = Death slogan I thought, wow, that is absolutely it. So many of us are robbed of our voice in one form or another. And it takes each of us whatever it does, in the time that it does, to reclaim it. Do you like movies? I love 'em. Do you like Raquel Welch? She's a favorite of mine. What a beautiful woman. She did this film Kansas City Bomber? Well, when I saw that, I dreamed of joining the Roller Derby. Be one of those rough and tumble roller derby queens. What are you laughing at? Can't see me toughing it out lap after lap against those hardcore skaters? Hey, I'm tougher than I look. It's hard though, you know. Dreaming. When you've got steel doors slamming in your face, locking you up tight night after night with nothing but four walls to look at. Or when you're wrapping yourself in a sheet and leaving your feet out in case you have to run from your daddy. At one point he fixed the lock on my door to where it wouldn't lock and when I told my mama the lock didn't work she asked daddy to fix it and he took the lock out and never put it back. It got to where I was asking my younger brother, he was nine at the time, eight or nine, something like that, to sleep with me. To keep daddy out of my room. Well, daddy told him he was too big now to be sleeping with his sister. So that was out. Then I started moving the furniture against the door. They came unglued because I was doing that. I was becoming more and more desperate because his attempts were more and more often and more and more brutal. I was having to fight harder and harder. When he wasn't able to have his way, he would masturbate in front of me. The bathroom had a window overlooking the washroom. Where the washer and dryer were. He wouldn't allow us to put any curtains on that window and I caught him, caught my dad, up on the washer and dryer, looking at me when I was taking a bath or a shower. So I started showering in shorts and a shirt. And I got into trouble for that but I kept doing it anyway. Then there was this time, I was cleaning my room and I found this cord, from my curtain going under my window out to the outside. So I went outside and I noticed the window was open a little bit and you could take that cord and

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move my curtain back. I started dressing in my closet. Across the street there was a home for wayward girls. Well, Daddy got to know some of those girls and started buying them beer and the matron of the home caught them. Caught the girls with the beer. And when she asked where they got it, they said from the house across the street. Our house. So the police came and mother answered the door and they asked her for the man of the house. Daddy was working so mama says, what's this all about? And the officer says, the young girls across the street have identified this home as where they're getting their beer from. And my mother says, we don't even drink beer. We don't have any alcohol. None of us drink. And he says, well I'm sorry but the girls said they got the beer from here. So when daddy got home mother told him and dad admitted to doing it. So my parents told my younger brother that dad would have to go to jail and there'd be no income. That they wouldn't be able to pay bills and stuff so my brother said he did it. That was the start of his criminal record. I was born in Arkansas. And we were really poor. Daddy was an overseer on a farm and he made something like a dollar fifty a day. And that was actually more than any of the other men were making because Daddy did such a great job. He loved to farm. But he couldn't make a living from it so we moved to North Little Rock and he went into carpentry. I'm the middle child. I have an older and a younger brother. I was a little over 6 and a half when my little brother was born, and like with me, mother almost died having him. She was so dark, my mama. Her hair was so black, like yours, that it would turn royal blue in the sun. So beautiful. They used to call her the Coca-Cola girl because she was built like a Coca-Cola bottle. So seeing her like that, totally white and...all sweaty...it was scary. The doctor put the baby in my arms and said, this is your baby. And I said, my baby? And he said, your mama's very, very ill and she can't take care of the baby so you're gonna have to help. So I said, okay. And I did. At six and a half I was left to care for a baby and a sick mother. Some of you might come from situations like that. Found yourself with a load of responsibilities at a ridiculously young age. Forced to grow up fast. And it wasn't just me who was working, my older brother had a paper route because he'd just

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gotten a bicycle. So here I was, six and half, cooking, cleaning the house, making formulas, everything. I didn't question, I just did it. It had to be done. First time I diapered him, I picked him up and the diaper fell off. Mother had lost so much blood and was so weak but when she saw that...well...I thought she'd die, laughing so hard. About that time I started going to church. Okay, okay, okay, save the raspberries. This isn't a sermon. It's not a come to Jesus moment. Not to say that making a little room in your heart for Him would be a bad thing. But I'm not here recruiting for the church. It's a plain and simple fact. I used to strap my younger brother in his stroller and off we'd go. Don't know why. My parents weren't religious folks. Or maybe they were, but they were too busy. It was never discussed. The spirit just moved me. Or maybe it was the free Kool-Aid. Whatever it was, it got me there. My faith in God is...and it really is my faith in God. Not church. There are some churches I walk into and walk right back out of because God may be in that church but the congregation is anything but Godly. And the worst offenders are usually the ones sporting those WWJD wristbands. What would Jesus do? I told one woman once, you should change that to WWJCD. And she said, what would Jesus Christ do? And I said, no. What would Jesus' crucifiers do? Because that's how you're behaving. Bottom line, my faith sustains me. I can't remember exactly when we moved to California. It was so sudden. There was no indication...no nothing...and everybody was shocked...because Governor Rockefeller had offered dad...he loved dad's work...it was being shown in the Arkansas Gazette in the Home and Living section practically every Sunday. He really is an exceptionally talented man. Rockefeller offered to put daddy in his own business. But instead we moved. I think daddy got in trouble. Was more or less forced to move. I found out years later that he used to get fresh with my girlfriends too. Daddy got a job with a contractor and the first house he went to remodel belonged to Roy Rogers. The cowboy star. Well Roy loved daddy's work so much he started telling other movie stars about him. It got to where the movie stars were calling the contractor and the only person they wanted was daddy. Roy suggested daddy get his contractor's license...well daddy only

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has a first grade education, so he couldn't read or write, so we kids, with mother's help, taught him. Mathematically, he's a genius. A total genius. And he doesn't know math. He doesn't know algebra or anything but boy he can cut corners right to the degree. So dad started studying for his contractor's license and got it. Daddy got his nickname, Jack the carpenter, from John Wayne. The Duke himself. John's real first name was Miriam or Marion, something like that. Can you imagine a big, tough, guy like that named Marion? Well neither could he, so he changed it. Or it was changed for him. Anyway, amongst all the movie mongrels daddy was known as, Jack the carpenter. Shoot, I remember Elvis Presley calling the house. Daddy was fit to be tied. Because Elvis had an eye for young girls. Daddy was adamant I be kept far away from him. The first house we lived in was um...a duplex...you know...double. Two story. Downstairs was the living room, dining room, kitchen, a bedroom and a bath...and upstairs there were two rooms, one had no door on it, that's where they put me, and my two brothers slept in the other one. I couldn't sleep because I never knew when daddy was gonna come up. I would fight him off and...for the life of me I never understood how it was possible that nobody ever heard me crying...please daddy...please leave me alone. You know what's hard? Reconciling ourselves with all of life's contradictions. I think life is just a different way of spelling paradox. And now that I think about it. Have you ever realized how close paradox and paradise is? I think there may be something to that. I'm not smart enough to make the connection but I think there was a heck of a lot more paradox in paradise than we've been led to believe. What's so frightening about people is that they are so seldom what they seem. They can have so many truly wonderful qualities and then turn around and do the most heinous things to one another. And some of us make it our life's work to justify it all. I don't like the idea of throwing people away. Of turning my back. Tossing them on the garbage heap. Relegating them to...well...wherever we relegate them. I feel guilty. And ashamed. I want to be the kind of person who extends the olive branch. Turns the other cheek. Who needs forgiveness more than the person who doesn't deserve it? I read that somewhere and it

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stuck. But how do I do that and protect myself at the same time? Because I don't like being hurt. I don't deserve it. It's a rough road. There have been so many times when I prayed to be able to shut down altogether. To stop feeling. Stop caring about anything and anybody. But then I'd think about it and I didn't really want that. Because if I went ice cold I'd potentially end up doing the same horrible things or worse. So I chose to be me. Keep my head down and do the best I could to survive with what I had to work with. One of the things that helped was the Winchell's donut shop around the corner from where we lived. I swear, if love had a taste... Glazed, jelly filled, twisted, curled, chocolate covered, rainbow sprinkled, love. Some people think donuts are sinful. A symbol of temptation. Say they make you fat. Clog your arteries. Contribute to all sorts of health issues. But please, choices people. There's this little thing called moderation. Gluttony is a sin, not donuts. Donuts don't make people fat. Eating two dozen instead of two does. Personal responsibility. Self discipline. You know what the big difference between kids and adults is? Kids don't understand the concept of consequences. It's acquired knowledge. You all are learning that the very hard way. It's something adults are supposed to teach you. But my God! The sheer number of adults I see punishing kids for following or reacting to their reprehensible example is staggering. This one's a kick...kids have no respect. I hear that daily. You know what I say? Maybe if they saw the adults in their lives behaving respectfully they'd be more respectful. Disrespect breeds disrespect.

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