



AT THE TABLE

BY MICHAEL
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DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



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AT THE TABLE was originally produced by Fault Line Theatre (Aaron Rossini and Craig Wesley Divino, Co-Artistic Directors; Melanie Hopkins, Managing Director) on June 13, 2015. It was directed by Michael Perlman, the costume design was by Isabelle Fields, the lighting design was by John Eckert, the sound design was by Chad Raines, the set design was by Tristan Jeffers, the props design was by Becky Phillips, the dramaturg was Jill Rafson, and the stage manager was Elizabeth Goodman. The cast was as follows:

LAUREN Rachel Christopher
ELLIOT Jimmy King
STUART Craig Wesley Divino
NATE Aaron Rossini
CHRIS Claire Karpen
NICHOLAS Jude Sandy
LEIF Ben Mehl
SOPHIE Stacey Yen

AT THE TABLE was subsequently produced by Broken Nose Theatre (Benjamin Brownson, Founding Artistic Director) in Chicago, Illinois, on February 10, 2017. Featuring significant rewrites, it was directed by Spenser Davis, the costume design was by Taylor Horst, the lighting design was by William Allen, the set design was by Spenser Davis, the props design was by Devon Green, the dramaturg was David Weiss, and the stage manager was Rose Hamill. The cast was as follows:

LAUREN Echaka Agba
ELLIOT David Weiss
STUART Evan Linder
NATE Adam Soule
CHRIS Elise Spoerlein
NICHOLAS Johnard Washington
LEIF Benjamin Brownson
SOPHIE Jennifer Cheung

The Broken Nose Theatre production was remounted at the Den Theatre on June 29, 2017, with the same cast and crew.

CHARACTERS

LAUREN—A black woman in her early – mid-30s

ELLIOT—A white man in his early – mid-30s

STUART—A white man in his early – mid-30s

NATE—A white man in his early – mid-30s

CHRIS—A white woman in her early – mid-30s

NICHOLAS—A black man in his mid – late 30s

LEIF—A white man in his late 20s – early 30s

SOPHIE—A half-Asian/half-Caucasian woman in her mid-30s

SETTING

Act One—A country house near New York City. A Friday evening and Saturday morning.

Act Two—Same house. A year later—a Saturday evening and Sunday morning.

AT THE TABLE

ACT ONE

Scene 1

A Friday night in a country house—one of those places that upper-middle-class people have that’s just far enough outside the city to call a country house. This one belongs to Nate’s parents. An open room with the dining and living areas. The kitchen is off.

Everyone is at the table, where the remains of a delicious meal sit. As the conversation unfolds, Lauren serves everyone more wine, as Nate helps himself to the leftover pie on the side table.

STUART. No, but you’re not understanding—

NATE. I understand

STUART. I’m not arguing that there shouldn’t be choice

NATE. You kind of are though.

LAUREN. He actually doesn’t even believe this.

ELLIOT. Except he does.

NATE. He does

LAUREN. No he doesn’t

STUART. Yes, I do.

NATE. He does.

CHRIS. —couldn’t have another bite.

NICHOLAS. I have to be careful.

CHRIS. Why?

NICHOLAS. My parents used to call me the human garbage disposal.

CHRIS. That’s hilarious

NICHOLAS. ’Cause I ate all the—

CHRIS. Leftovers, right.

NICHOLAS. Leftovers, yeah. From people’s plates.

CHRIS. Right.

ELLIOT. Sorry, he does. NICHOLAS. I can eat anything.
STUART. I do. CHRIS. Not me.
LAUREN. You don't. NICHOLAS. No?
STUART. Well let's see what CHRIS. Nope, when I'm full, I am—
Chris thinks.
CHRIS. Oh. What?
STUART. We're just having a conversation—
LAUREN. Stuart! ELLIOT. Don't do this to her—
STUART. I'm not doing anything to her! I'm asking her a question.
ELLIOT. I didn't bring her up here to hate all my friends.
STUART. You knew what you NATE. Um, all?
were getting her into.
LAUREN. That's true. You ELLIOT. You know what—
can't bring new friends to meet
old friends and not expect the
old friends to be themselves. NATE. Teasing.
ELLIOT. What?
NATE. She's saying you should've expected Stuart to be an asshole.
ELLIOT. Can't we just play a game?
NATE. This conversation is way better than a game
STUART. I do agree with that.
CHRIS. What's the conversation?
LAUREN. You don't have to humor him.
CHRIS. It's fine. I like conversation.
NATE. He's really just an asshole.
STUART. Dude.
NATE. You are.
ELLIOT. You are.
STUART. Okay. So we're starting all agreed that I'm an asshole.
LAUREN. He's not really.
STUART. I'm not really.
NICHOLAS. *(To Nate.)* Where's the bathroom?

LAUREN. Oh, did no one show you?

NICHOLAS. Sorry, didn't mean to—

LAUREN. No, please.

STUART. It's really not a big deal. It's just a conversation.

LAUREN. Elliot, can you show him?

ELLIOT. What?

LAUREN. Can you show Nicholas where the bathroom is?

ELLIOT. Oh, um

NICHOLAS. You don't have to show—

NATE. Down the hall to the left.

NICHOLAS. Thanks.

Nicholas exits.

LAUREN. We're so rude.

ELLIOT. We?

NATE. *(To Stuart.)* Speaking of rude, Stuart, you were saying?

LAUREN. Why didn't you just show him?

STUART. Oh right. So, Chris...

ELLIOT. You're being ridiculous.

CHRIS. Yeah?

LAUREN. Whatever.

STUART. Wait, I want you guys to listen.

LAUREN. *(To Nate.)* You had to remind him?

ELLIOT. Of course you do. *(To Chris.)* I'm really sorry.

NATE. Just doing my role as host.

CHRIS. Stop.

LAUREN. Right.

STUART. May I? Please?

LAUREN. Go ahead.

ELLIOT. Oh lord.

STUART. So, Chris. I was just making the argument that, when it comes to abortion—

ELLIOT. Oh my god.

STUART. When it comes to abortion, there is a case to be made about why it should be illegal. A moral case.

LAUREN. Not that he agrees with the moral case.

STUART. Well—

LAUREN. You don't.

STUART. I don't know. I might.

LAUREN. You don't.

STUART. I might.

NATE. I believe that he does.

LAUREN. Shut up.

STUART. Nate knows me.

ELLIOT. Right, let's just see how quickly that moral case disappears if Lauren wakes up pregnant tomorrow.

STUART. I mean—

LAUREN. Yes?

STUART. You're missing the point of my argument.

ELLIOT. You're missing the point of mine.

STUART. Well, when it's your turn I'll listen to your point. But for now it's my turn to make my point.

ELLIOT. Which is what?

STUART. Which is that I don't know that I believe in abortion, that abortion is a, a,—

What I mean is, isn't it just possible, just a little bit possible, that it lives in that same gray area as slavery.

NATE. Believe in? There is abortion. It exists. It's not like Santa Claus.

ELLIOT. Santa Claus isn't real??!!

NATE. *(To Elliot.)* Sorry

Nicholas quietly walks back in.

LAUREN. Really? Slavery?

NATE. Oh!

STUART. Let me just make my point.

LAUREN. Slavery?

NICHOLAS. Should I turn around?

ELLIOT. Oh my god.

LAUREN. Oh, he's just getting to the good stuff.

STUART. Listen, I'm not trying to offend anyone.

NATE. That's actually exactly what you're trying to do

STUART. I'm not. I'm just trying to say that if sometime in the not-too-distant future—

ELLIOT. It's very entertaining, really.

STUART. Sorry, Nicholas, yes—I'm making a—
Can I make my point now?

LAUREN. Please.

NATE. Am I going to have to explain to my parents why their house got burned down?

STUART. Well, let me talk and then we'll see.

NATE. Go ahead.

LAUREN. Yes, go ahead.

ELLIOT. Please.

STUART. My point is that, let's say that in the not-too-distant future, they discover—scientists discover—that fetuses really can feel pain, and that life—what we call life—really does begin at conception.

NATE. How exactly would they discover that?

STUART. That's not important—science is improving every—you can't seriously be arguing that there isn't the possibility that scientists can discover new ways of interacting with a developing fetus.

NATE. Fine.

STUART. A hundred years ago it would've been unimaginable to think that we could, I don't know, go to space—

NATE. Seriously? Space?

ELLIOT. *(To Chris.)* They aren't usually this clichéd.

LAUREN. I cannot believe this conversation

STUART. MY POINT is...

Everyone looks at Stuart.

My point is that: At some point in the not-too-distant future, scientists may discover that a fetus is a, a person. And if that's

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5 men, 3 women

Six friends head out of the city on their annual retreat for the weekend. With no social media, no cell phones, no internet allowed at all, this leaves them with one thing to do...look up from their screens and talk to each other. And when the liquor starts flowing and the tongues start to loosen, no conversation is uneventful and no topic is off-limits. *AT THE TABLE* is a comedy that begs the question: What happens when those with privilege are pushed to the periphery and a marginalized minority suddenly finds its voice amplified? Who is allowed at what discussion table, and who isn't?

"...[a] terrific script... Perlman reveals the assets and liabilities of American community... In its best moments, AT THE TABLE recalls Stephen Karam's THE HUMANS in its poignant revelation of the difficulty of breaking bread even with those we love the most."
—Chicago Tribune

"[AT THE TABLE] is an absorbing Chekhovian issue play, in which points of privilege are gently pressed, and the political and personal are revealed to be in a fraught long-term relationship."
—Time Out New York

"...clever and funny... the characters are well-written, well-developed and each role has a meaningful place in the ensemble. ...the nuanced dialogue feels vital and real. ...[AT THE TABLE] will move you to think and also to communicate."
—Splash Magazine (Chicago)

"With meaningful and timely dialogue about important topics in American cultural identity bubbling up throughout the play, perhaps the most exciting and rewarding aspect of Perlman's AT THE TABLE is that he never once offers an answer to the questions his script raises."
—Out Magazine

Also by Michael Perlman
FROM WHITE PLAINS

ISBN 978-0-8222-3825-6



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