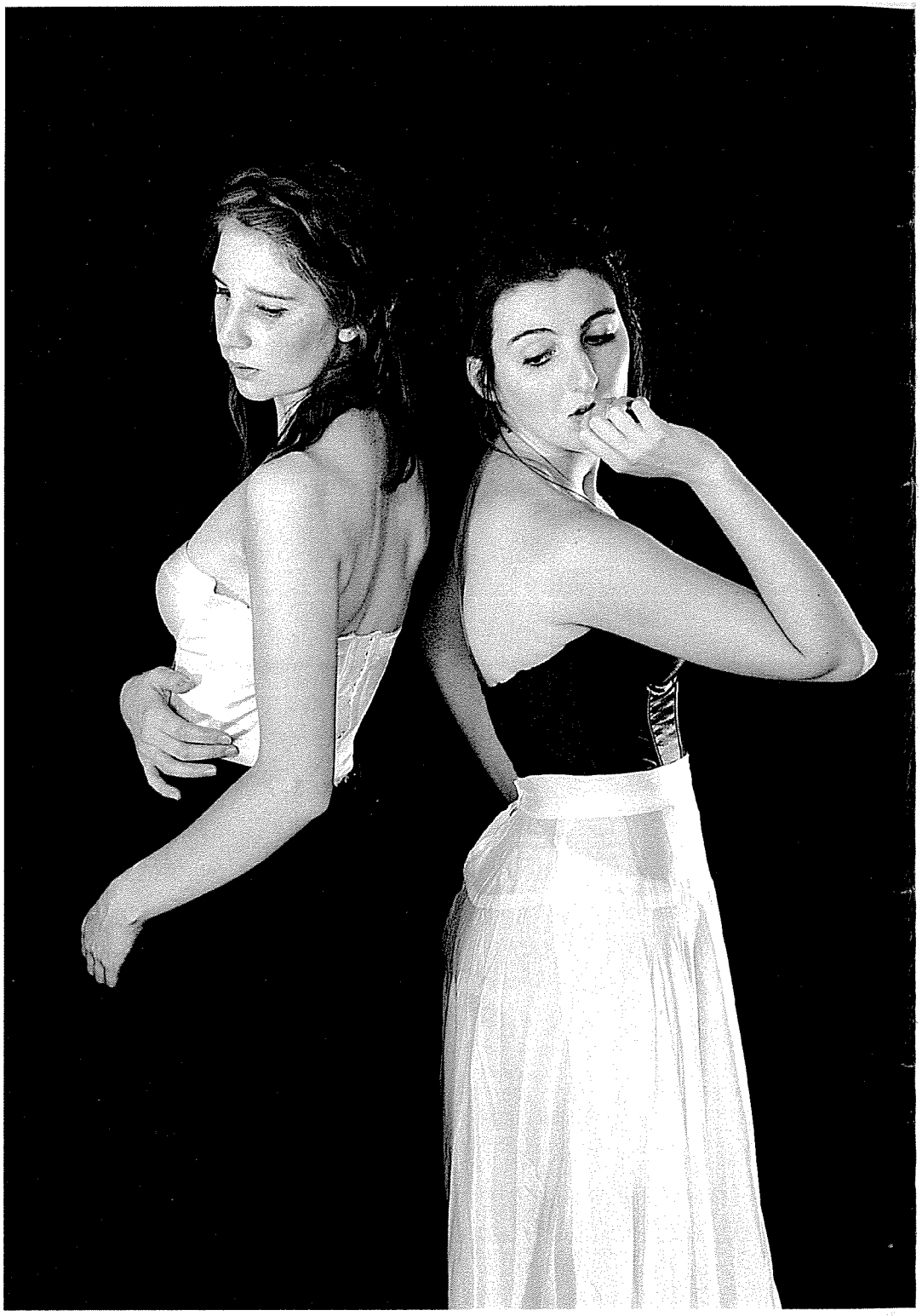
FLW THEATRE PRESENTS

IN THE NEXT ROOM
- OR -
THE VIBRATOR PLAY

- BY -
SARAH RUHL

MAY 1ST – 4TH, 8TH – 11TH 7:30PM
THE GUILD THEATRE



In The Next Room
- or -
The Vibrator Play

By Sarah Ruhl

Original Broadway Production by Lincoln Center Theatre – New York City, 2009

IN THE NEXT ROOM or the vibrator play was originally commissioned and produced by Berkley Repertory Theatre, Berkeley, CA
Tony Taccone, Artistic DIrector / Susan Medak, Managing DIrector

IN THE NEXT ROOM or the vibrator play was developed at New Dramatists

Assisted by Union House Theatre,
The University of Melbourne Theatre Board
& MU Student Union Ltd.

– CREW –

Director	Matilda Dixon-Smith
Assistant Director	Robert Frantzeskos
Producer	Robert Alexander Smith
Production Manager	Grace Taylor
Stage Manager	Jasmine Griffiths
Assistant Stage Manager	Jamie Dawkins
Publicity and Marketing	Alice Goodman
Set Designer	Kim Ritchie
Lighting Concept	Julia Knibbs
Lighting Design	James Lipari
Costume Designer	Katya Baker
Composer	Lucy O'Brien
Hair and Makeup Designer	Georgia Vann
Set Construction Manager	Chris Uber
Sound Operator	Jasmine Griffiths
Lighting Operator	Ruth Blair
Backstage Crew	Yane Cheung
	Marisa Matear
	Tamara Dissanayake
	Rhiannon Down
	Alice Gornall
Front of House Manager	Emily Wilden
Head of Bar	Maddelena Gali
Publicity Photography	Cameron Dunlop
Graphic Design	Robert Alexander Smith
Production Photography	Sebastiean Wood

– CAST –

Dr Givings	Craig Battams
Catherine Givings	Bridget Sweeney
Sabrina Daldry	Leila Enright
Mr Daldry	Jan Mihal
Elizabeth	Amelia Burke
Annie	Sally Kingsford
Leo Irving	Sebastian Kitchen

– SYNOPSIS –

IN THE NEXT ROOM (OR THE VIBRATOR PLAY) is a stimulating period piece about marital mishaps and imprisoned desire, centring on a young doctor and his wife. The effervescent Catherine Givings (Bridget Sweeney) is struck with an insatiable curiosity about her husband's strange new electrical therapy device. Relegated to listening at the door as Dr Givings (Craig Battams) treats his patients in the next room, a chance encounter with new patient Sabrina Daldry (Leila Enright) brings Catherine closer to the doctor's work than she ever hoped to be.

The Givings's have lost that loving feeling, their house lousy is with visitors – including a reluctant wet nurse (Amelia Burke), a patient's disgruntled husband (Jan Mihal) and a philosophical midwife (Sally Kingsford) – and Catherine is becoming distraught. When Catherine's husband refuses to show her the treatment, Mrs Daldry becomes her way into the next room. Armed with the knowledge the forbidden therapy affords her – not to mention the temptation of a dreamy English painter (Sebastian Kitchen) – Catherine must find the courage to seek out the connection she really wants with her husband (and it's not electrical!).

This is a startling vision of the dawn of the electrical age – and the spark of female empowerment it encouraged. Sarah Ruhl's IN THE NEXT ROOM (OR THE VIBRATOR PLAY) premiered on Broadway in 2009; it was nominated for three Tony Awards and was a Pulitzer Prize finalist in 2010.

– DIRECTOR'S NOTE –

I'll be frank, IN THE NEXT ROOM (OR THE VIBRATOR PLAY) came to us by accident. After a different show we'd hoped to produce became unavailable, THE VIBRATOR PLAY was slapped on the table. So I settled in to read what I was sure was an inferior play that would never invade my heart the way that other show had. As it always seems to, THE VIBRATOR PLAY had the last laugh.

On a plane from Melbourne to Sydney, I chortled into my copy of Sarah Ruhl's masterful contemporary farce – trying to hide the cover from the rest of the passengers, lest they discover I was so thoroughly enjoying a play about vibrators. It was a play concerned with balance: between old and new, tension and release, and blissful ignorance and gut-wrenching discovery. And it was pretty bloody funny! A very particular scene between Mrs Givings and Mr Daldry (where they discuss umbrellas) stole my heart; I knew instantly that I had to direct this show.

Ruhl has constructed this expert relationship dramedy; and that irksome yet irresistible genre is what makes the play so contemporary – and so appealing. Beneath the high concept of a private doctor's surgery, and a mess of stimulating electrical devices, is an honest relationship drama. Ruhl's exploration of miscommunication in marriage is at the heart of a flashier tale about female desire and sexuality. Both of these things attracted me to the show – the vital currency of gender politics mixed with that universal question: 'What exactly is love?' It was at once controversial and gloriously pedestrian.

Once we discovered that what we were really directing was a sophisticated romantic comedy, the casting was simple. Sharp comedic actors, who also possessed a keen understanding of dramatic emotion, were disturbingly easy to find. We were lucky enough to assemble an appropriately eclectic group of actors – our mature, discerning, magnificently ridiculous cast. From one delightful rehearsal to the next (even those hampered by the siren call of YouTube), they never fail to surprise and impress me. Using the screwball comedies of the mid 20th century as a jumping-off point (the especially fabulous 'The Philadelphia Story'), we hurtled into the Givings's absurd, tense living room drama.

Ultimately the process was one of discovery: finding out that orgasms come in any shape or form (not merely the ones that plastic-surgerised porn stars perpetuate); that knocking on wood never helps; and that Mr Daldry might be heavily into psych-trance.

Working with a production team comprised of some of the most brilliant, gutsiest ladies I've encountered has been a blessing: it's not often that so many clever women are given the power and creative autonomy they deserve. For me, THE VIBRATOR PLAY has been mostly a burgeoning romance with Grace, Jasmine, Kim, Knibbs, Katya, Georgia and Alice. (That's not forgetting our surrogate males, the James'.) This show is the result of an organic collaborative effort; a supportive environment marked by respect, professionalism and the occasional smack of silliness.

And where would I be without my Robs? Rob Smith took on the role of producer with intelligence and gusto – he shines as a leader. Rob Frantzeskos is my most delightful counterpoint; a tender, insightful and irreverent directing partner. Working with our whole production team, for whom passion and commitment is a way of life, has been a very special experience.

THE VIBRATOR PLAY is an entirely different FLW show – still with that confronting edge we value as a company, but sweeter. It is an extraordinary work: heart-breaking, comical and a little bit sexy. Enjoy the performance; if your experience tonight is anything like my afternoon reading on the plane, we've done our jobs!

– Matilda Dixon Smith – Director

– A NOTE ON THE SOURCES –

The history of the vibrator and the varying historical practices of genital massage to paroxysm as a treatment for 'female hysteria' have unquestionably been a part of the western medical tradition – albeit one that is often overlooked and avoided by historians. Many of these practices can be traced to ancient Greece; indeed, the etymological origins of 'hysteria' itself derive from the Greek cognate of uterus, ὑστέρα (hystera), linguistically presupposing the notion of the womb as the source of women's medical pathologies. Some of these practices are recorded with striking (and often amusing) detail; the prominent 16th century Dutch physician Pieter van Foreest wrote on the matter:

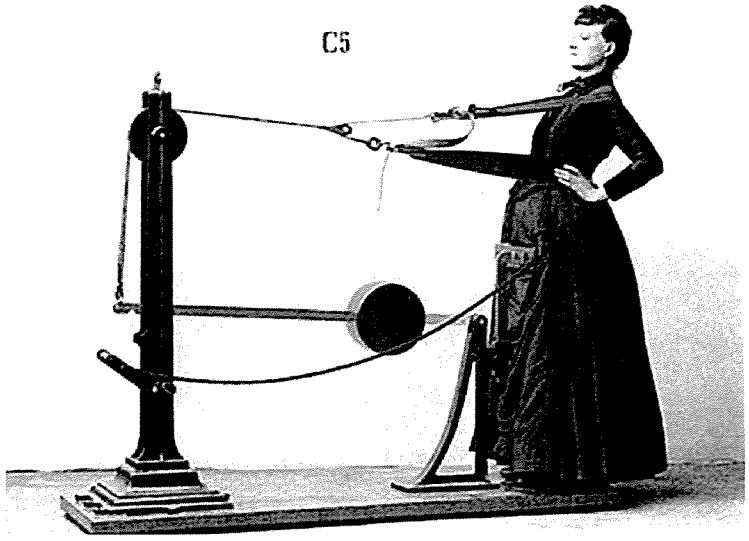
What these symptoms indicate, we think it necessary to ask a midwife to assist, so that she can massage the genitalia with one finger inside, using oil of lilies, musk root, crocus, or the like. And in this way the affected woman can be aroused to the paroxysm. This kind of stimulation by the finger is recommended most especially for widows, those who live chaste lives, and the female religious. It is less often recommended for very young women, public women, or married women, for whom it is a better remedy to engage in intercourse with their spouses.

Descriptions of this treatment can be found well into the late 19th century, when IN THE NEXT ROOM takes place. In the United States, developments in the application of electricity found their way into the physician's office, where the vibrator emerged as an electro-mechanical therapy in response to demand from physicians for more rapid and efficient physical treatments – including, of course, for hysteria.

It was the decadence of the fin de siecle that saw the electrical vibrator sold for self-prescription and domestic use. Furthermore, it saw the development of several different conceptions and varieties of the vibrator: Mortimer Granville's 'Vibrator' (1880); the 'Vibratile' (1899), which sold for five dollars; the 'Hand-Crank VeeDee' (1900), which looked somewhat like a hand drill; and the 'Pneumatic Detwiller' (1914), capable of utilising various attachments for compressed air and/or gas.

It was not until 1952 that the American Psychiatric Association disregarded the term hysteria as an authentic diagnosis – understanding that with so many possible symptoms hysteria was rather a catchall diagnosis, where any unidentifiable ailment could be assigned. As diagnostic techniques improved, the number of cases drastically decreased. For instance, symptoms which would now be classified as epilepsy, anxiety attacks or even schizophrenia were frequently confused and labelled as hysteria.

From the 1960s until today the vibrator is firmly secured in the industry of pleasure. The Journal of Sexual Medicine published statistics demonstrating that about 53 per cent of women and about 46 per cent of men in the United States aged 18 to 60 have used a vibrator. Finally (in the US, at least) they can be found at a Target, Walmart or any decent department store near you.



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Special Thanks

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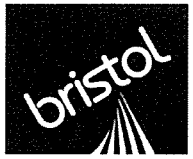

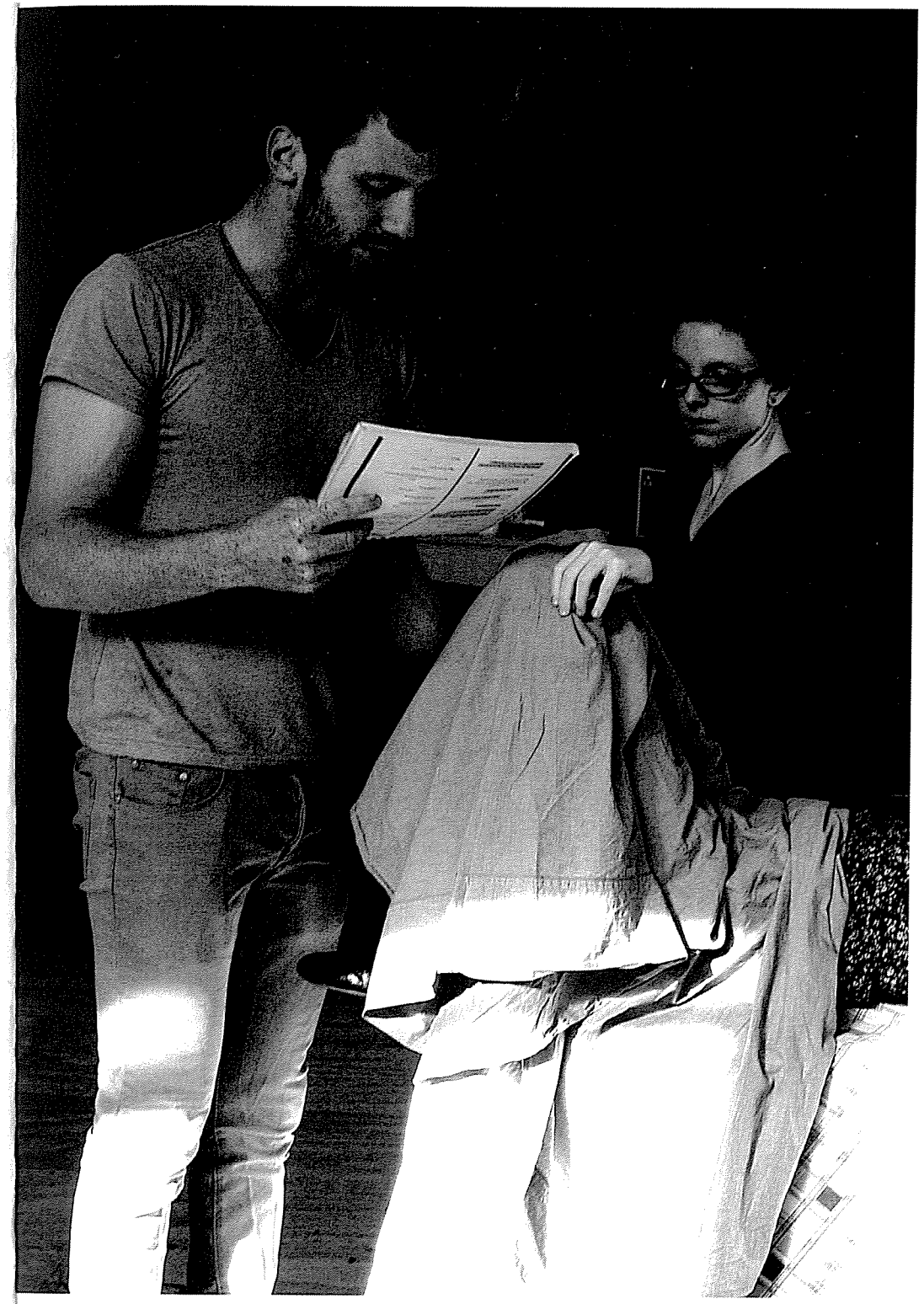

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